

# MAGAZINE OF ART

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GEORGE AMBERG: ART, FILMS, AND "ART FILMS"

PAUL S. WINGERT: SCULPTURE OF THE NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS

ALBERT ELSEN: THE GENESIS OF RODIN'S "GATES OF HELL"

WRIGHT MORRIS: THE VIOLENT LAND—FAULKNER AND EXPRESSIONISM

MARCH 1952

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# MAGAZINE OF ART

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# MINDING

## THE ARTIST

A FEW weeks ago I spent an evening listening to the talk of a group of painters. It was a group given to reflection and discussion among its members, and to arguing—on occasion with philosophy and on others with personal invective—not so much the technique of their art, since as professionals they took craftsmanship for granted, as its motivations, its meanings and its potential audience. But for this once they had decided to hear what a few non-professionals, critics, writers and historians who had shown interest and enthusiasm, had to say about them and their work.

Throughout the evening there was a tension in the air that was both exhilarating and disturbing. The exhilaration sprang from the obvious dedication of these men. It was clear that for them art was no simple *métier*, that they believed in it as something more than a marketable product and something larger than a method of personal recognition. They had their share of egotism, to be sure, but no more than any other professional group arguing a topic, even though here the subject was in a sense themselves. Their relation to each other had its difficult moments, but they were willing to accept differences, opposition and even insult in order to get on with the matter at hand.

But to their invited guests whose ideas they had come to hear, these artists behaved in a curious manner. They were at once proud and humble, eager and resentful, explosive and secretive, generous towards art but possessive of the results of their own work. One felt that the original impulse to understanding and communication—the impulse which had prompted the invitation to these expert representatives of the public—was somehow being blocked off; and it was disappointing and disturbing to see the evening end in frustration and the artists withdraw to themselves.

In part, of course, the shyness and the stubbornness came from a very human desire to try out the writers and make them prove their professed understanding and interest. They had to be willing to stand up under abuse, to deny charges of stupidity and cruelty to artists, to come up smiling when told that artists alone know anything at all about art. In a word, they had to suffer to prove their love. But in the artists' hostility there was more than this.

There was first of all the very real hardship that many of these men were experiencing for the sake of their art. As the representatives of society, even if its most interested, devoted and informed individuals, the writers were proper targets of resentment. (It is in this spirit that artists attack the museums that do the most for them.)

There were in the group men who are eminently successful, and who had no external cause to feel they were either neglected or misunderstood. Yet their attitude was much the same. And this I think is because the artist today is still heir to the romantic tradition of the nineteenth century which measures a man's greatness by the degree of his neglect and looks forward to such a reversal of values by posterity that contemporary recognition is necessarily suspect. (And surely he can produce supporting evidence.) Thus the successful artist must in some measure feel that he is appreciated for the wrong reasons rather than the right so that, instead of threatening his work with obscurity, the enthusiastic blindness of the present will give way to the equally enthusiastic insight of the future. Add to this romantic tradition of neglect the early hardships and later glory (now within their lifetimes) of some of the names in modern art he most reveres, and compound it with the American emphasis on success alone as justifying the practice of any profession, and the artist's ambivalence towards even an admiring public is easily comprehensible.

Long before *ut pictura poesis* went out, artists must have found the verbalization of visual effects suspect. The romantic insistence on unanalyzable inspiration, the impressionist reiteration of an essentially personal, unique vision of nature only increased that distrust. In the twentieth century, the elaboration of the relation between subconscious impulse and conscious control has carried the artist to the point where he is suspicious of all logical discourse on art—even his own. His work has its own existence, which propositions can but deform. Thus he is led to resent the best-intentioned discussions aimed at greater understanding—and all the while complain about being misunderstood. And so too, fusing intention and result, and thinking of his art as a direct extension of himself, he comes to take a possessive attitude towards his work upon its completion, and at once desires and fears its independent existence as a public object.

Of course not all contemporary artists respond in this fashion. And those who do are hardly to be criticized; the situation in which they find themselves is neither of their making nor their choosing. It does, however, suggest again that one of our greatest needs is a body of writers in constant and cordial contact with groups of artists—writers who would have the confidence not only of the public, but also of the artists. They might help to remove a fortuitous barrier, unwelcome on both sides.

R. G.

# THE VIOLENT LAND

## *Some Observations on the Faulkner Country*

### *Wright Morris*

**I**N the landscape of a great imagination, no matter how many times we travel across it, there is always something new, or even something old, to marvel at. This is peculiarly true of what we call the Faulkner country. In this violent land, most of the travelers stick to the main-traveled roads—great pity, as there are few estates now open to the general public to compare with the hallucinated world around Frenchman's Bend. There may be other travelers like myself who have been troubled by the extremes of light and darkness, so an account of my own wanderings there may be of some use. Recently, I have even felt at home. As this is more, in certain respects, than the inhabitants manage to achieve for themselves, the stranger may find this point of view a helpful one.

Not long ago, turning from Faulkner to an album of modern paintings, I was struck by a feeling of *déjà vu*. One painting, in particular, troubled me. It showed a rooster, an aging cock, that had been strung up by the neck and picked—but what haunted me about this bird was that it had been *lynched*. There was no other word for it. It had been the subject, the innocent victim, of an act of violence. Using this bird, the artist had managed to express himself, just as the mob, using some man's body, expresses itself. In one of his letters Keats describes how a street brawl is a vulgar sight, but nevertheless the forces released in this brawl are beautiful. Perhaps this is beauty in its last extremity.

The man who painted this picture, Chaim Soutine, was born in Lithuania and spent most of his life in France, and there is reason to believe that he had never seen a man lynched. But it is known that he once tried to hang himself. He failed in the act—but using the cock he has expressed himself. Soutine is a member of that branch of modern painting which includes Edvard Munch, Kokoschka and Rouault, but its most celebrated member, of course, is Van Gogh. They are called expressionists. With them, expression is everything. The color shrieks, the light flares or burns, faces are red, green, purple or yellow, and objects have the appearance of having been seized and contorted by powerful hands. The artist is possessed, one sometimes feels, by a raging inarticulate demon, and the paint itself is possessed by a fervor to express something. The



*Chaim Soutine, Cock, 1925, oil,  
39½ x 17¾", formerly collection Bernard Reichenbach, Paris,  
courtesy Museum of Modern Art*

painter does it with paint, but it can also be done with words:

"From a little after two o'clock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield called the office because her father had called it that—a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three



Vincent Van Gogh,  
Landscape with Olive Trees,  
1889, oil, 28½ x 35½",  
collection John Hay Whitney,  
New York,  
courtesy Museum of Modern Art

summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark air was cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the sealing blinds as the wind might have blown them."

This is the opening sentence of *Absalom, Absalom*, (New York, Random House, 1936). This is painting as well as writing, and the impressionist palette is used for expressionist purposes. But we are still in the foreground of this picture; with the next sentence we are given the subject:

"There was a wisteria vine blooming for the second time that summer on a wooden trellis before one window, into which sparrows came now and then in random gusts, making a dry vivid dusty sound before going away: and opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none know, sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung straight and rigid as if she had iron shinbones and ankles, clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet, and talking in that grim haggard and amazed voice until at last listening would renege and hearing—sense self-confound and the long-dead object of

her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the abiding and dreamy and victorious dust" (*ibid.*, p. 7 f.).

This is the picture—but we are already within the frame. Faulkner, like Van Gogh, does not approach his subject—he is inside of it. Being within, he works himself out. I propose to show, in terms of this passage, that Faulkner does not merely use a certain technique, nor resemble certain painters, but that he is one of them. What he has to say projects itself in the same way. This is, of course, treacherous ground; but if we are to understand what Faulkner is doing, and above all, how he does it, we are obliged to leave the safe ground and walk out on it. It is from this vantage point that the violent land makes sense. There is not merely reason in this madness—there is also method in it.

Ten years ago, most readers found this passage unintelligible. In a review of the book, on its publication, Mr. Clifton Fadiman pointed out that, "Very few things in the book remain themselves. Each one reminds Faulkner of something else." This is an extremely penetrating statement, and goes right to the heart of the matter—it defines Faulkner's expressionist technique with great accuracy. But Mr. Fadiman, like many readers, was not looking for what he found—so what he found struck him as unintelligible. As an instance of supreme obscurity, Mr. Fadiman singled out this passage: "Her legs hung

... clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet."

"See it?" Mr. Fadiman asked, and his reply, of course, was no. From the vantage point of *realism*, *naturalism*, etc.—this picture is indeed hard to see. But suppose we step back and take the artist's point of view. All we have to do, it seems to me, to see these legs hanging with impotent and static rage, is to visit the halls of any modern art museum. We might even find Miss Coldfield sitting there. There in that dim hot airless room, the air latticed with yellow slashes of light and the window opening on that wisteria, blooming for the second time that summer, and the sparrows that came in the random gusts, making a dry vivid dusty sound. This is what Faulkner saw. Needless to say, this is how he painted it.

Van Gogh and the expressionists put on their color as Faulkner puts on his words—without very much concern as to the rules of the Academy. *Impotent and static rage* is both a picture—and a curse. They are intended to produce an abnormal effect. The normal effect, plainly, is not what the artist wants. What he wants is the abnormal effect carried to the point of hallucination—but carried in such a manner that it is art. In a few painters, and in even fewer writers, this is what we get. Very few things in the Faulkner landscape remain themselves. It is not merely Miss Coldfield, in her eternal black, who sits there with her feet suspended with rage—but it is also Faulkner, and if we look closely, ourselves as well.

But this passage also tells us something else. The key words—in the painter's sense, the key colors—are those that Mr. Fadiman singled out. These legs that hung in the air with *impotent and static rage*. Further on in the same sentence, the word "impotent" is used to modify frustration, and rage itself becomes outrage.

Turning to *The Wild Palms*, published several years later, we find the second convict described in this manner: "He looked like something exposed to light by turning over rotting logs or planks and he too carried (though not in his eyes like the first convict) a sense of burning and impotent rage" (New York, Random House, 1939, p. 25).

A page or so further on: "... he too mused at times with that sense of impotence and outrage though it did not show on him as on the first convict since he leaned on no haltered broom to do it and so none knew it was there."

I am not concerned with how many times Faulkner repeats these words, or seems to repeat himself, but in the specific charge these words carry whenever they appear. It is a fixed charge, consistent as a signature. It is the key, this charge, to the violent shades of the Faulkner palette, and we might as well complain about Van Gogh's

yellow or Soutine's red as carp about the Faulkner violence. A byproduct of his rage, it is the source of his most incandescent light.

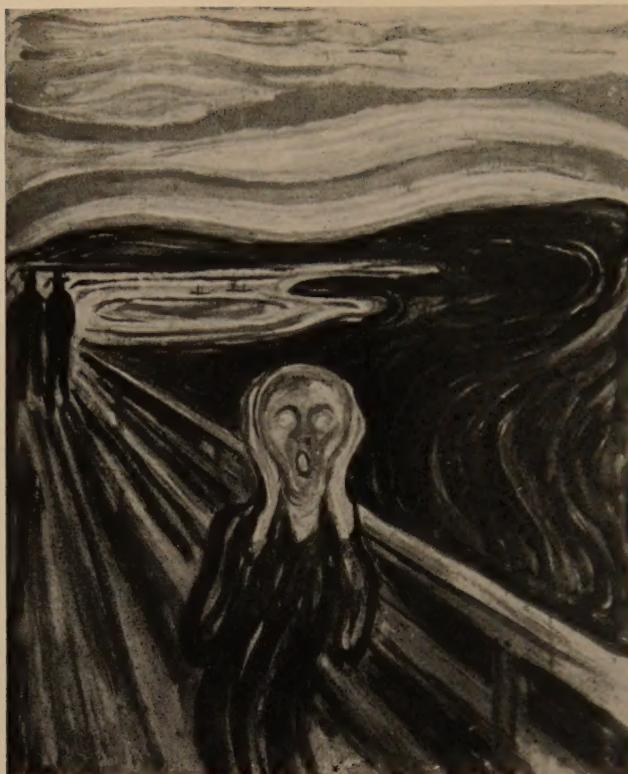
The language of expressionism—if we examine the record—tends to be an eruptive, volcanic language, and it exists in order to describe an erupting, violent world. There are no celebrated Milquetoast expressionists. The discharge of this temperament is usually marked by violence: Van Gogh squeezing tubes of paint onto the canvas; the strangely static yet fluid universe of Munch, where time has come to a stop, so it would seem, in order to explode. But even more akin to Faulkner is the vivid contorted world of Soutine. For it is Soutine who painted—as if with pigments made up of the victim's entrails—that cock that had been strung up by the neck and *lynched*. Expressionists are violent. Violence makes them expressionists. But it is no longer necessary to point out that the rage these men feel is not something merely personal, eccentric and localized. They are like safety-valves on the boiler of the human predicament.

The average man who begins that letter to *The Times*, or who wants to be heard, or to correct an injustice, but who finds himself silent, his rage swallowed down, with the morning newspaper in his hand: Sometimes this man must cry out—or he will explode. It is the expressionist who gives vent to this crippled rage, this impotence to honorably right unspeakable wrongs. One of Edvard Munch's most terrible paintings—and no other word describes it—is the one that he calls, simply, *The Cry*—a landscape that dissolves into one vast, piercing human wail.

This brings us to sex—Faulkner's most celebrated ingredient. Rage of this kind often terminates in sex. There is no better subject for

Oskar Kokoschka, Peter Altenberg, 1909, oil, 30 x 28",  
collection Mrs. Frederick W. Knize, New York, photograph John Brook





Edvard Munch, *The Cry*, 1893,  
oil, 33 x 26½",  
Municipal Art Collections, Oslo,  
courtesy Museum of Modern Art

the revelation of violence. Sex is to Faulkner what a plate of apples was to Cézanne. It is upon this material that he can the most profoundly express himself. With a few exceptions, the characters we find in the Faulkner country are interchangeable—they are forces rather than personalities. And the forces that flow through them are rage and sex. They are not the standard vehicles of love and romance. There is romance in Faulkner, but it lies somewhere else. The sense of "incipient accouchement"—in Faulkner's words—that seems to bathe the ripe figure of Eula Varner also hovers like an aphrodisiac mist over most of Faulkner's world. It is a pollen that fertilizes everything. The reader is made aware, like that train of swains in the wake of Eula Varner, of ". . . a leashed turmoil of lust like so many lowering dogs after a scarce-fledged and apparently unawares bitch" (*The Hamlet*, New York, Random House, 1940, p. 149).

This is the atmosphere. It is not a note that Faulkner occasionally strikes. The reader who steps from Boston Commons into the heart of Faulkner country may think that what he finds is pornography. But he is wrong. That is not what he finds, but what he feels. There is simply no place, in Faulkner's leashed turmoil of lust, for pornographic dawdling. The lowering dogs know the real scent, and they stick to it.

But within this violent landscape—like mounds of earth created by the flood, then by-

passed by it—there are islands, remote and serene, with a mythical pastoral calm. The reader is apt to come upon these islands like a man who clings to the side of a boat, from where he sees, right there on the horizon, but hopelessly out of his reach, a vision of a finer, truer world—a ravaged but surviving remnant of the past. It is the flood, of course, the raging flood, that gives force and eloquence to these mirages, and holds the reader in the present even as it woos him with the past.

The figure of Lena Grove, serene and monumental as she moves, like a sleepwalker, through the violent landscape, is a force that no disaster, no conceivable event, will wash away. She is the Great Mother, the abiding earth, the patient and enduring force of life itself—but she is also a woman; we claim her as one of us. There would seem to be no rage, no violence in this nature, to express itself. There is within her a peace that makes rage seem ridiculous. As she is one of the great figures in our fiction, I used to ask myself why it was that there were not, in this landscape, more Lena Groves. The answer, I think, is clear enough. We see Lena Grove—but the reason we see her with such clarity, almost clairvoyance, is because she moves and has her being in a world of violence. It is this landscape that gives her serenity such depth. An illusion of realism, for the moment, seems to reduce the over-all hallucination—but it is the background that gives the foreground figure its effect. There

are such passages and serene landscapes in Van Gogh. But the effect is produced through—rather than in spite of—expressionist terms.

There is another surprise for the traveler who will seek it out. At the heart of this landscape is a flowering wilderness. Here lies the innocent land, the lost paradise, of Faulkner's wonderful Indians—a reservation where violence, a white man's noise, is kept at bay. Or rather it is laughed, with a high mythical laughter, off the face of the earth. This is the world of Issetibbeha, Ikkemotubbe, Log-in-the-Creek, Herman Basket's daughter, and that white man David Hogganbeck, who told the steamboat where to walk. This landscape glows with a softer light, and it is here, in the wilderness, that Faulkner gives free rein to an often concealed quality: his humor. In the wilderness it dissolves his rage. There is nothing anywhere to compare with the fabulous courtship of David Hogganbeck and Ikkemotubbe for Herman Basket's sister, that primal and receding vision of womanliness. This marvelous tale, like a woodland stream of clear and undefiled water, winds and unwinds its way through the heart of the Faulkner wilderness. It remains pure, where others become corrupt and befouled. It never hurries, where the others move towards an impending flood. But it is pure Faulkner—one might even say it is the purest Faulkner of

Georges Rouault, Red-Haired Woman, 1908, gouache, 27 x 19 1/4", collection Mr. & Mrs. Lee A. Ault, New Canaan, courtesy Perls Galleries



all—since it is here that the cloud of rage seems to have blown away. Here in that timeless pursuit, through the primeval forest, on the part of those dreamers Hogganbeck and Ikkemotubbe, for the mystery of life, the Holy Grail, as it lures them in the form of Herman Basket's sister. *Das ewige Weibliche zieht uns hinan*. And she . . . naturally, she has become the property of that colossal ne'er-do-well, that idler known as Log-in-the-Creek, who lies forever on the floor with his harmonica cupped to his mouth.

This vein of mythic humor is consistent in Faulkner, but the reader is not apt to observe it, or even trouble to look for it, in a highly charged scene. The traveler who is swept off his feet is hardly aware of the humor of his situation. But Faulkner is. The rage is often humorous. But as he seldom points it up, or troubles to exploit this quality, the panting reader may hardly know that it is there. It is the special bonus for those who turn to his books again. It is the humor, as well as the rage, that now appears. It is here in these touches, we might say loving touches, that appear in the details of large compositions, that make repeated exposures to what we call the classics profitable. Here is an instance:

"They were young voices, talking not in shouts or screams but with an unhurried profundity of volume the very apparent absence from which of any discernible human speech or language seemed but natural, as if the sound had been emitted by two enormous birds; as if the aghast and amazed solitude of some inaccessible empty marsh or desert were being invaded and steadily violated by the constant bickering of the two last survivors of a lost species which had established residence in it—a sound which stopped when Ratliff shouted. A moment later the two girls came to the door and stood, big, identical, like two young tremendous cows, looking at him.

"Morning, ladies," he said. "Where's your paw?" (*The Hamlet*, p. 54).

If there are times that the sympathetic reader would like the damper lowered a little—and there are, of course, such times—he will have to exercise this privilege himself. Without this excessive draft, there might be no fire. There would be, considering the materials, only quantities of smoke.

Now that the Faulkner country, like a national preserve, is a celebrated part of the American scene, more and more armchair travelers will be seeking it out. Thanks to Malcolm Cowley, the area has been lovingly mapped. My own observations—after many years of snooping and aimless wandering—are concerned with the differences between such a landscape and any map. The strangeness is there. The traveler should be told to look for it. It is the reason he should be traveling at all in the violent land.

# EARLY PICASSO DRAWINGS IN THE CONE COLLECTION

*Adelyn D. Breeskin*

WHEN the sisters, Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone, went to Paris during the summer of 1905 they often visited the Stein family, their distant cousins. Gertrude and Leo Stein told them about a struggling young Spanish painter who was considered particularly deserving of their concentrated attention and guided them to his studio, a dilapidated tenement in the rue Ravignan on Montmartre, where he had lived since his return from Barcelona in the spring of 1904. This artist was the young Pablo Picasso, just emerging from his sombre "blue period" into his more varied "rose period." He had concentrated during the earlier months of 1905 on a long series of studies of acrobats, clowns, saltimbanques and jugglers. We can picture his studio with the huge canvas of the *Family of Saltimbanques* taking up most of the space, with hundreds of related drawings cluttering up the floor and piled on chairs and tables.



Greeting card to Miss Cone, 1907

The Cone sisters were immediately interested in these sketches and went back a number of times during that summer and the following one to make purchases from among them. From Picasso's work of these two years they thus acquired a remarkable group of drawings of major importance. There are, altogether, thirty-six of them, only one of which has been recorded in Christian Zervos' great catalogue of Picasso's works. Together with ten of Picasso's later drawings, they have now been bequeathed, as part of the Cone collection, to the Baltimore Museum of Art. The ten drawings here reproduced have been chosen as representative of the early group. The quality of the drawings being equal, the choice made from among them is due sheerly to personal preference. With few exceptions these drawings have not previously been reproduced except in the de-luxe catalogue of the Cone collection published in a limited edition of three hundred copies in 1934 and now out of print.

A number of these drawings are related to other drawings reproduced in Zervos' *Catalogue*; to drypoints reproduced in Bernhard Geiser's *Picasso, peintre-graveur*; and to paintings published in Zervos and in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. These three books are referred to in the following notes.

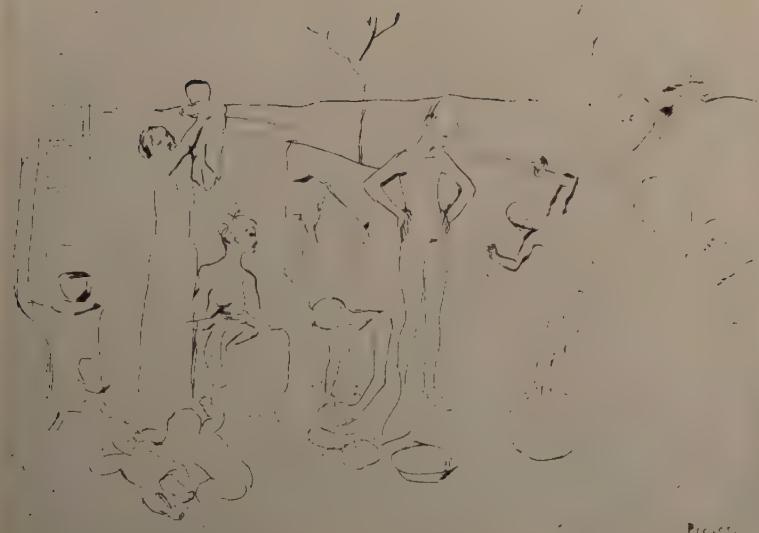
*Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905,  
oil, 84 x 90 $\frac{1}{2}$ ",  
Chester Dale Collection,  
on extended loan to  
Art Institute of Chicago





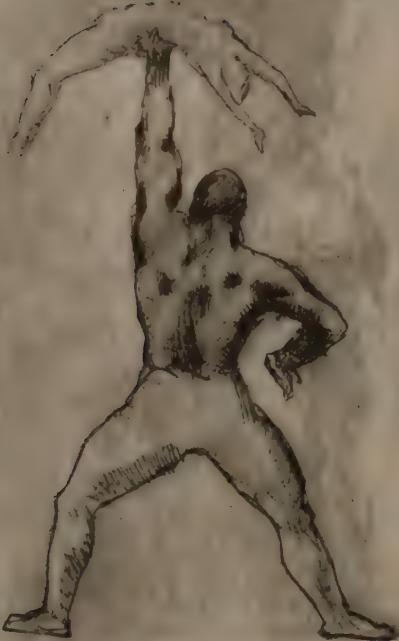
1. **The Circus Family.** 1905. Pen and watercolor;  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ ". This thoughtfully composed work may well present an early idea for the major painting of this period, the Family of Saltimbanques. This is further substantiated by Fernande Olivier in her memoirs, who writes, "(Picasso) executed a large canvas, a group of acrobats on a plain, some in repose, others working; a child on a ball tries to balance himself. The canvas, if I remember rightly, was changed many times." This "large canvas" no longer exists, but Fernande's description seems to apply to the composition of our watercolor, as well as to the very similar drypoint (below; Geiser, no. 9).

Acrobats, 1905,  
 $11\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{7}{8}$ ", drypoint,  
Museum of Modern Art



*Picasso*

2. *The Strong Man*. 1905. Pen, watercolor and crayon;  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ". Apparently the only representation of this typical circus character in Picasso's work. The vivid strength of drawing in the main figure contrasts dramatically with the lightness of the upheld body of the young girl. A similar contrast is found in another drawing in the collection, *Seated Clown and Boy*, in which the heavy bulk of the man accentuates the delicate structure of the child's figure (Zervos, pl. 122, lower left).



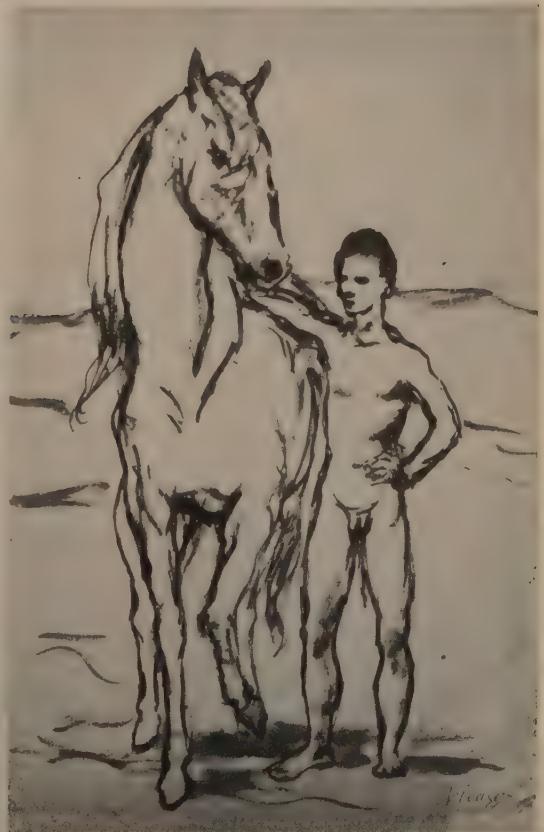
*Picasso*

3. *Circus Family with the Violinist*. 1905. Pen and watercolor;  $6\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{5}{8}$ ". A variant of the Acrobat's Family with a Monkey (Zervos, pl. 131). There are also in the Cone collection four separate small drawings, similar in pose to the mother and child group in this sketch. In all these, the figure of the mother is more weighted and rotund than the type found in the final painting, which contains many other changes as well. The placement and pose of the monkey is the one element retained.





4. *The Monkey*. 1905. Pen and watercolor;  $19\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ ". Combining delicacy and strength, order and gesture, classic breadth and repose, this drawing is a superb example of Picasso's early period. The concept and definition mark this drawing as a study from nature which served for the monkey in the preceding sketch as well as for the final painting of the Acrobat's Family with a Monkey (Zervos, pl. 131) and, even more exactly, the drypoint (Geiser, no. 13).



5. *Boy Leading a Horse*. 1905. Sepia brush;  $19\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$ ". There is in the Cone collection another such study in pencil and watercolor; both relate to the large painting in the William S. Paley collection as well as to the Waterhole (Zervos, pls. 118 and 119; Barr, p. 42). Of our two drawings, this one is the more vigorous and shows a closer connection between the boy and the horse than is found in the finished painting. A sense of movement pervades this entire work, extending even into the background.



Picasso

6. *Fernande and Child*. 1905-06.  
Charcoal;  $12\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$ ". This  
drawing is representative of Pi-  
casso's early classic style, in  
which solidity is blended with  
great lyricism. The modeling is  
attained with the merest sug-  
gestion of shadows and by the  
accenting of outlines. The in-  
formality of the grouping con-  
veys a tender feeling for the re-  
lationship between mother and  
child, realized both emotionally  
and compositionally.

*La Coiffure*, 1905-06,  
oil,  $68\frac{1}{8} \times 39\frac{1}{4}$ ",  
Museum of Modern Art



7. *Girl Combing Hair*. 1905-06.  
Pen and ink;  $12\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$ ". This  
is a preparatory drawing for  
*La Coiffure*, now in the Mu-  
seum of Modern Art, but is  
much closer in character to the  
drawing of the Blind Flower  
Vender (Zervos, pl. 140; Barr,  
p. 48). The free, cursive qual-  
ity of the pen line is similar.  
By contrast, the painting for which  
this is a study is solidly com-  
pact, indicative of Picasso's new  
interest in structural forms—an  
interest perhaps inspired by  
Iberian sculpture.



8. Reclining Nude. 1906. Pencil;  $18\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{1}{8}$ ". Shortly after the completion of his portrait of Gertrude Stein, now the property of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Picasso produced a large number of female nudes, in all of which the Iberian influence is evident. Our drawing is closely related to this group, but is set apart from it by a definitely individual character, which may be accounted for by the fact that Gertrude Stein posed for it, as affirmed by Miss Cone in conversations with the author.



9. Nude with Raised Arms. 1907. Watercolor;  $12\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ". This is what Alfred Barr calls a "postscript study" for the left central figure in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. It is executed in blue and earth colors, like many of Cézanne's watercolors, but with heavy black lines added. It was formerly in Gertrude Stein's collection, probably acquired by her directly from Picasso. The figure itself, which is close in pose to the woodcut (Barr, p. 57), is given additional interest by the lines breaking up the background into different segments, blending with the figure and heightening the feeling of tensions within it.



10. Head. 1906. Pen and ink;  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ ". (cf. Zervos, pl. 164). Executed with quill or bamboo pen, this drawing shows the characteristic treatment of the eyes so strikingly introduced by Picasso into his Gertrude Stein portrait. In its monumental sculptural quality, together with the formal accentuation of the eyes and the mask-like detachment of the head, it anticipates the figures at the left in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Barr, facing p. 54) in the Museum of Modern Art.

# THE GENESIS OF RODIN'S "GATES OF HELL"

*Albert Elsen*



ONE of the most interesting problems in modern art is the genesis of Rodin's *Gates of Hell* (Fig. 1). Despite the fame of the artist and the publicity accorded to his statues, his life's work remains little known and somewhat of a mystery. Oddly enough the artist himself, who in later years became expansive on almost any topic in art, had little to say about the project which intermittently occupied thirty-seven years of his life. Only a handful of sketches and small plaster models stand as witnesses to the creative

evolution of the gates. They contain illuminating material on the little-known but vitally important formative years of Rodin's art. It is important not only to relate these sketches to the sources of Rodin's inspiration in the past, but also to observe the tremendous bounds his art was to make in the creation of this project.

On August 19th, 1880, Rodin received a commission from the Beaux-Arts committee:

*"Monsieur Rodin, artiste sculpteur, est chargé d'executer moyennant la somme de huit*

Fig. 1 (opposite). Rodin, Gates of Hell, photograph Louis-Fréderic

Fig. 2 (below). Lorenzo Ghiberti, Gates of Paradise, East door of Baptistry, Florence, 1425-52, photograph Alinari



mille francs le modèle d'une porte décorative destinée au Musée des Arts Décoratifs: Bas reliefs représentant *La Divine Comédie du Dante*. . . ."

That Rodin elected to limit his subject to representations of the *Inferno* was a matter of personal choice, dictated by reasons outside the scope of the present article. The commission contains no such stipulation. It designates Rodin as an "artiste sculpteur." He was not an architect, and his experience with this medium was limited to decorating building surfaces with caryatids and

putti. He readily accepted, however, the challenge of having to design the door itself. That an artist should be both sculptor and architect was a situation unique in the nineteenth century. Although we are concerned here primarily with the architectural development, as seen in the preliminary sketches, it will also be necessary to consider certain sculptural and iconographic ideas because of the decisive influence that they exerted upon the architectural character of the work.

In his initial essays Rodin turned to the



Fig. 3. Tracing of Rodin's first sketch for Gates of Hell, 1880, 6 x 7½", collection of the author

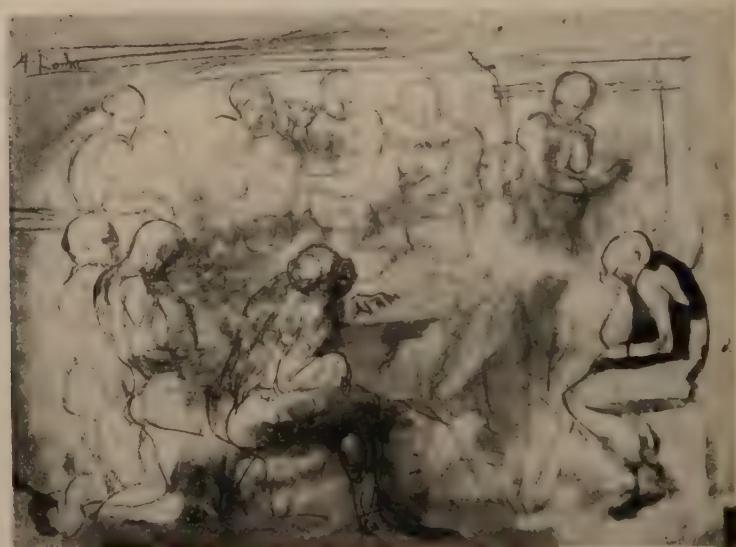


Fig. 4. Rodin, Sketch for panel of Gates of Hell, pencil, ink and wash, 6 x 7½", collection of the author

art of the past and more specifically that of the early Italian renaissance. While visiting Italy in 1875, he had seen and admired Ghiberti's doors of the Florentine Baptistry (Fig. 2). The paneled format of the east door impressed Rodin as ideal for representing an epic theme such as the one he had chosen for his own project.

The earliest extant scheme made by Rodin unmistakably points to Ghiberti's portal as the source of his ideas. This sketch (Fig. 3), which was torn in half, exists on a small sheet of paper over which the artist later pasted a drawing. The penciled outline of the door, here represented by means of a tracing, conveys the impression of a drawing done from memory. There is a lack of balance between the panels. The lines, thinner and more tentative than they appear here, lack the decisiveness which is so manifest in the sculptor's figure sketches of this period. Rodin was hesitant with this new art of architecture. The molding has a maze-like aspect and presented the artist with unanticipated problems in the adaptation of Ghiberti's door. Even the sim-

plest features of the plan, the panels, show that he could not decide upon their frame.

Each of the panels was to have been filled by a scene in relief such as the one shown in the sketch pasted over the architectural scheme (Fig. 4). The division of the panels on one side into three parts indicates the numerous incidents Rodin contemplated illustrating.

A second pencil drawing done in 1880 presents an even more striking affinity with the renaissance prototype (Fig. 5). (The figures in ink were added at a later date.) All the panels may now be seen, some bearing indications for the relief sculpture. But the differences between the two artists' conceptions are of particular interest. Rodin has included eight panels, two less than Ghiberti. This could relate to the structure of Dante's *Inferno*. Conceivably Rodin planned to depict scenes from the first circle, or Limbo, in the side panels, while devoting the central leaves of the door to the remaining eight circles.

Small side panels like those of Ghiberti's east door appear in Rodin's outline. There is,



Fig. 5. Rodin, Second sketch for Gates of Hell, 1880, pencil with later additions in ink, Rodin Museum, Paris

however, an important and instructive difference. Ghiberti's sculptural niches with their single statues are about two-thirds the height of the adjacent sections. In true renaissance fashion, the figures stand or move about easily in the space provided for them. Rodin's side panels are the same height as the neighboring squares, and in addition the occupants of the niches are relatively larger in relation to the available space than are those of the renaissance. Rodin has also removed the graceful arch which crowns the enclosure. As a consequence, his figures exist in a closed and restricted box-like space. Often their bodies touch three of the four walls; the woman at the right, second from the top, touches all four.

Although the artist abandoned many features of this sketch, he retained this effect of constriction brought about by the interplay of sculpture and architecture. The pensive figure in the panel at the lower left anticipates the *Thinker*, who in the final form of the gates must sit eternally beneath the heavy cornice which prevents him from rising (Fig. 15).

The bound state of the inmates of Hell in this early study reflects, I believe, the frame of mind of the sculptor as he began his work. He was supremely conscious of the integrity of the architecture, both as to its function and its surface area. His sculpture at this time was not of an architectural nature. He was fully aware of the commission as a decorative work to be housed in a public building. In addition, Rodin was laboring under the weight of the opinion of the

public, the critics and even of artists, that sculpture was a subordinate and purely decorative art. He was seeking to compress within a limited geometrical area the world of dreams and visions which had haunted him for half his lifetime. When we consider his figure drawings of these years, with their great daring of conception and execution, we can begin to realize the great restraint the artist was imposing upon himself.

As he became more absorbed in his work, Rodin gradually cast off the elements that bound him and gave free vent to his passions and deep-rooted artistic desires. These strainings and separations are visible in the early sketches. The first indication of the great change which was to take place in the creation of the gates can be found in the ink additions to his second sketch, already mentioned (Fig. 5). The figures at the top are related to those in a sketch he made after seeing the entrance to an underground sepulchre such as existed in Holland (Fig. 6). Above this sketch Rodin has written: "*Tombeau, entrée du tombeau comme les caves hollandaises—au fond le bas relief des sculptures.*" Beneath the figures he has written, "*entrée de l'enfer.*" This inscription I believe definitely allies the sketch with the gates. I would date it in the late 1870's.

Funereal monuments such as these held a strong attraction for Rodin, who was obsessed by death and the afterlife. He saw the people about him as a frivolous crowd, heedless of death. To shock them out of their indifference he conceived the creation of a giant tomb. In this world

Fig. 6. Rodin, Sketch of entrance to underground sepulchre, c. 1875-80, ink and wash, Rodin Museum, Paris, photograph Berne Maroteau



Fig. 7. Rodin, Third sketch for Gates of Hell, 1880 (?), pencil, ink and wash, Rodin Museum, Paris, photograph Berne Maroteau



Fig. 8. Rodin, Eve, 1881, bronze, height 69", Rodin Museum, Paris (from Cassou, Rodin, London, Phaidon, 1949)



of the dead there was to be no Purgatory, no hope of salvation. The dominating figure sketched in the center of the door is not Christ nor the hopeful figure of the Virgin as in gothic portals, but Eve, symbol of the fall of man. The identity of this figure is confirmed by comparing it with his statue of Eve done in 1881 (Fig. 8). While taking from the gothic the compositional idea of a dominating central figure, he was continuing at the same time the dramatic and militant character of medieval art.

What I believe to be the third sketch in a possible chronological sequence shows Rodin's expanding conception (Fig. 7). As in the previous study, he worked over the penciled outline at a later date and swept over the frame impulsively with a wash as if impatient with the details of the frame. The panels are roughly shaded in order to suggest their contents and weight with respect to the entire structure. Rodin's student notebook in the collection of the late Jules E. Mastbaum, New York, reveals his capacity for working in great detail on a small scale. The absence of a completely detailed study in each panel may be attributed to the artist's greater preoccupation with the architectural problems;

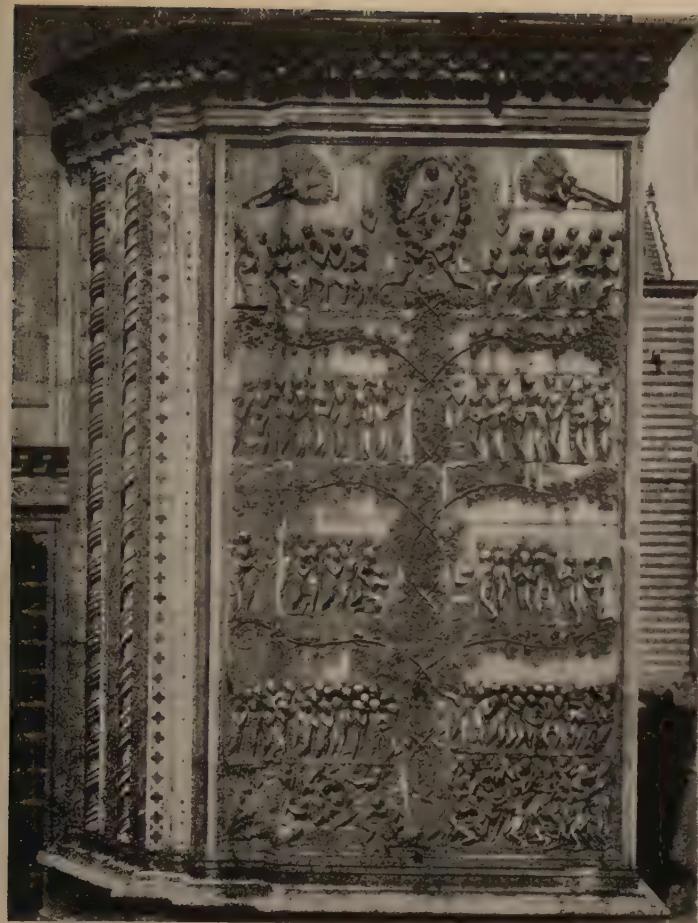


Fig. 9. Last Judgment, 14th century,  
right pilaster of façade,  
Cathedral, Orvieto, photograph Alinari

he never doubted his ability to supply the reliefs. A few notations were sufficient to enable him to visualize the final effect in his mind.

In the center at the top is the shadowed notation of a dominating figure which Rodin had come to feel was vital as a focusing point or fulcrum. In the final work, the secondary idea of having the single figures at the side serve to convey dramatic action became of central importance. The figures themselves in their pose and proportion reveal a striking similarity to those of Michelangelo in the Sistine Ceiling. After his next sketch Rodin was to place less and less emphasis upon large groups of figures participating in a specific event.

A comparison should be made between Rodin's third sketch and the sculptured pilaster on the façade of Orvieto Cathedral depicting the *Last Judgment* (Fig. 9). Five series of reliefs are divided into ten panels by a twisting vine. This vine resembles the foliate border found in Rodin's sketches—a similarity that is even more apparent in the ultimate version of the gates. In the final form of Rodin's portal, the vines play an active part in enhancing the ominous, oppressive nature of Hell, while at Orvieto the

foliage is more decorative and passive. Since no foliate borders divide the bottom two ranges of the Orvieto pilaster, it can also be thought of as being divided into eight sections like Rodin's gates. These resemblances, the iconography, and the parallel positions occupied by Christ in the Orvieto pilaster and the *Thinker* in the gates seem to support the assumption that Rodin saw and admired the Orvieto façade on his trip to Italy in 1875.

The fourth design is the most detailed record we have of the artist's plans for filling the panels with reliefs, although it provides few clues as to the specific subject of each scene (Fig. 10). The main objective of this drawing was a simplification of the over-all scheme. Rodin's rejection of the side panels is graphically demonstrated by the firm vertical brush-stroke at the right. He has transferred their occupants to the corners of the central scenes. This arrangement was unquestionably inspired by the Sistine Ceiling of Michelangelo, which is conceived as a relief; the contorted postures of the muscular corner figures derive from the same source.

Rodin eliminated the foliate ornamentation entirely. It is characteristic of him that an

idea he had set aside was to reappear much later after having undergone a complete transformation. The dominating central figure has been erased, but its shape indicates that it was still to be a standing person such as Eve.

In this sketch the artist has introduced for the first time a wide space between the lowest panels and the bottom of the door. A departure from the Ghiberti prototype as well as from his own earlier studies, this helps to establish the drawing as late in the series. This space at the base is one of the features retained in the final portal.



Fig. 11. Rodin, Model for Gates of Hell, clay, 10' high, Rodin studio, Meudon, photograph Louis-Frédéric

On one of the shelves in the sculptor's studio at Meudon, I came across a small ten-inch-high clay model (Fig. 11). It is the only surviving example of the original plan not done on paper. The abstract character of the piece makes it of extreme interest. The fingertip method of working the clay, necessitated by his choice of a renaissance style, must have been a great frustration to Rodin, who was more accustomed to a vigorous gouging and working of his medium.

On October 20th, 1881, Rodin wrote the Beaux Arts commission:

*"Déjà vous m'avez accordé la commande et c'est grâce à un premier subsite qu'il m'a été possible de jeter les bases de ce grand travail. Je devrais dire travail grand puisque cette porte aura au moins 4m50 sur 3m50 large—et comprendre en dehors des bas reliefs beaucoup de figures colossales de chaque côté. . . Il me faut au moins trois années pour achever cette oeuvre. . ."*

Rodin was refused the money to erect the life-size statues of Adam and Eve and was forced to abandon this project. A page from his notebook, called to my attention by the secretary of the Rodin Museum in Paris, Mme Goldscheider,



Fig. 10. Rodin, Fourth sketch for Gates of Hell, pencil, ink and wash, 1880-81 (?), Rodin Museum, Paris, photograph Bernes Maroteau

Fig. 12. Rodin, Page from notebook showing sketches for Gates of Hell, ink, Rodin Museum, Paris

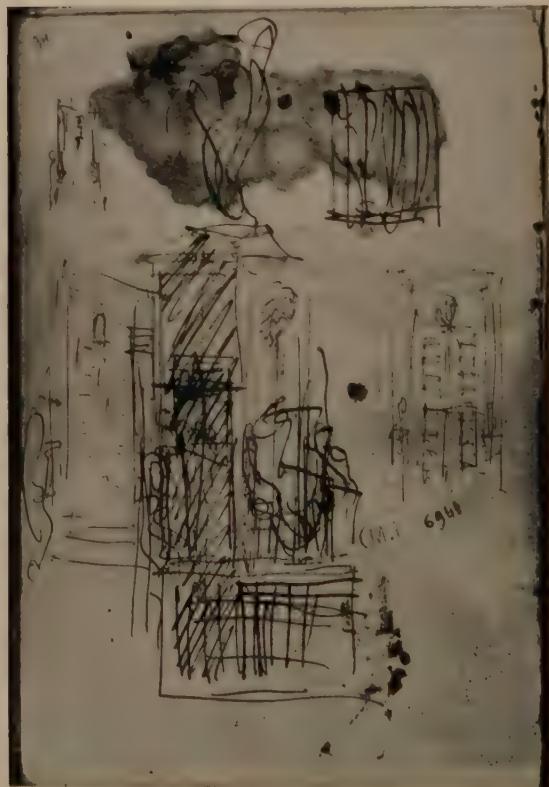




Fig. 13. Rodin, Model for Gates of Hell, c. 1881, plaster, 10 x 8", photograph Louis-Frédéric

contains several trials of the doorway and shows how he proposed placing the statues (Fig. 12). To balance them in a kind of trinity, he added a third figure at the top of the entrance, who by his pose must be the *Thinker*.

The dimensions proposed by Rodin in the letter quoted above are about two-thirds of those in the final door. His estimate of three years to complete the commission would have been correct had he adhered to his plans. Up to now his concept had been dominated by the architectonic of the door, the sculpture being confined to limited areas. The fluidity and sureness of these last sketches indicate that Rodin was on his way to mastering the architectonic problems.

The wide deviation between Rodin's projects for the gates at this stage and at the time of his death, when they were still incomplete, may be accounted for by the fact that up to this point his designs had been carried out on paper. When he began to translate his vision into clay, he experienced a rapid outpouring of ideas. In the second plaster model, of which several casts ordered by the artist exist at the Rodin Museums in Paris and Philadelphia, at Meudon and elsewhere, we can see the final conception of the

gates beginning to emerge, with all the stirrings and powerful forces attendant at its birth (Fig. 13). In order to fix his thoughts as quickly as they arose, Rodin developed a shorthand of shadows and shapes. Small dabs of clay were hastily applied to the surface to indicate the position of a group or a single figure. They bear a striking resemblance to the groups on the vases he decorated at Sèvres. In this model he experimented for the first time with a frieze, to allow his figures greater freedom.

The most exciting and telling witness of the great transition Rodin's ideas were undergoing is to be found in the model contained in the chapel of the Rodin Museum in Paris (Fig. 14). Its surface is a battleground on which is waged the struggle between the art of the past, as seen in the previous sketches, and the new transformations that Rodin sensed were imperative. It is the scene of the conflict between the artist's growing sculptural conception and the constraining frame of the architecture. The wavy, unarchitectural silhouette of the model eloquently expresses the turbulent powers at work within it. The pitted and pinched surfaces indicate the vigor with which the sculptor attacked them.



Fig. 14. Rodin, Third model for *Gates of Hell*, plaster, c. 1881, 41 x 23½", Rodin Museum, Paris, photograph Louis-Frédéric

His impatience with temporary models can be seen in the base of the study where he has torn out the bar of clay at the left, leaving the right side untouched. No attempt was made to balance off the figures in the side reliefs.

The detonating force underlying this activity lay within the artist's gradual abandonment of Dante's Hell in favor of his own maturing conception. From this point on he divested his work of specific reference to literature, time or place. The figures of Paolo and Francesca and of Ugolino, prominent at the base of the model, are the only ones that can be positively related to Dante. With their reference to passion and destruction of the family, they are in keeping with the new vision of Hell. No longer as in ancient times a place in the bowels of the earth populated by demons and sadistic tortures, Hell in Rodin's conception exists in man himself, in the unsatisfied passions which he must carry forever within him. It is the torment of the soul struggling to free itself from the incarcerating

flesh. The *Thinker*, who appears at the top of the model, symbolizes man, constantly aware of the forces which tear him apart from within.

The mirror of this struggle for Rodin is the flesh. He sensed that movement is the common denominator of the flesh and the spirit. He therefore reduced his objective to providing unlimited freedom for movement in his portal. As his sculptural conception grew, the flat renaissance doors were abandoned and the recession of the central panels deepened. This inward thrust was countered by a massive overhang and protruding flanks, affirming Rodin's love of the gothic portal. In some instances the sculpture can be seen overflowing its borders. This, too, signifies a departure from the episodic character of previous plans. One of the torments of man is his restlessness; to emphasize this, external constraints were eliminated. Great subtlety in the handling of the architecture was required in order to dispel any impression that the physical composition of the gates represented the actual structure of Hell.

Any attempt to interpret the final work in terms of Dante's zones or circles is fruitless.

This third model brings to a close the second phase of the work. The artist was now fully aware both of the universality of his theme and the necessity of employing all his art to orchestrate it. In the last model prior to the erection of the full-scale work, we do not see a definite architectural solution to the great problems raised by the expanding sculptural ideas. Although the difference between the models and the drawings is considerable, that between this last model and the ultimate work is even more pronounced. It is possible but not probable that other transitional models are missing or were destroyed. The evolution of the *Gates of Hell* was basically an internal process, the artist retaining within him any of his ideas until he could at last work them out on the final doorway.

NOTE: A full-scale plaster model of the architecture of the *Gates of Hell* was erected about 1883. Rodin worked on it intermittently until his death in 1917, at which time it still remained incomplete. It was exposed only once to the public, in 1900, denuded of the sculptural groups. The severe criticism the artist received at that time contributed to his failure to complete the work.

In 1938, thanks to the generosity of the late Jules K. Mastbaum, bronze casts were made for the Rodin Museums in Paris and Philadelphia; another is in the Museum at Zurich, and a fourth is in a Paris bronze foundry awaiting shipment to Japan. The plaster portal as it existed at Rodin's death is in the museum at Meudon (height 21', width 13'). There are almost two hundred sculptures on the *Gates of Hell*. The *Thinker* (6'6" high), conceived and executed on a small scale in plaster about 1880, was first exhibited in 1900.

Fig. 15. Rodin, *The Thinker*, detail of *Gates of Hell*, photograph Louis-Frédéric



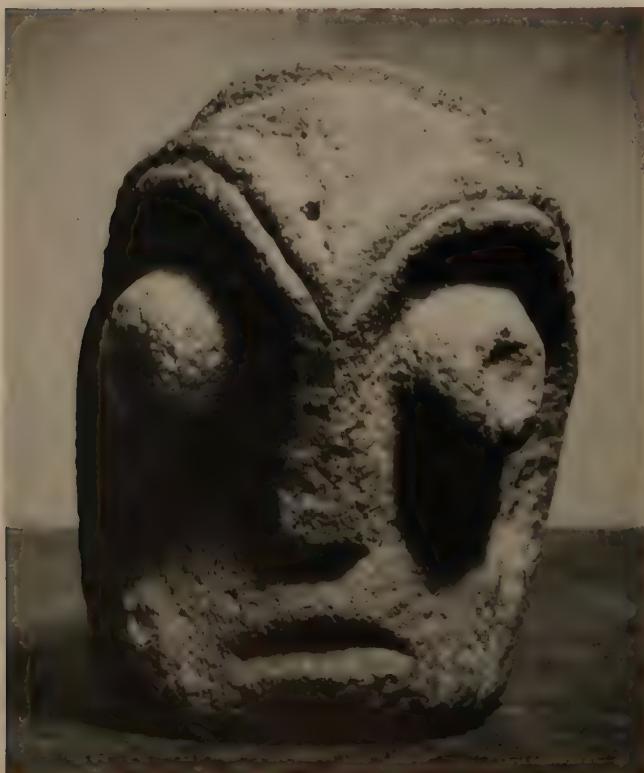
# EARLY STONE SCULPTURE OF THE NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS

*Paul S. Wingert*

Long before the Europeans came to this continent, remarkable stone sculptures were produced by the Indians who lived in the Columbia River valley and in the Fraser River-Puget Sound area. Over a hundred of the finest examples of this amazing art will be on exhibition at the Portland Art Museum from March 11th to April 17th.

Throughout the continent, the American Indian used stone for his tools and implements. But in various parts of the country—notably in the Ohio-Mississippi Valley, in the Southeast and the Southwest, in California and in the Northwest—he also created a stone sculpture. The human and animal forms represented were usually small in size and naturalistic in conception. The most impressive stone sculpture north of Mexico was developed in the Northwest.

The stone art of this area includes the embellishment of utilitarian objects—mortars, pestles, mauls and clubs—and sculptures intended for ceremonial use, carved in the round or in relief. Characteristic of Northwest stone sculpture is a wide diversity of styles, ranging from the naturalistic to the conventionalized or to the abstract. Technologically skillful, this is also an art of high esthetic achievement.



*Human Head Mortar. Lower Columbian Style. 5" high. Portland Art Museum*

Many sculptures from the Columbia River valley are like this one, unique in design, but demonstrate elements which make possible the recognition of areas of style. The monumental scale of this small mortar, for example, and the bold rendering of forms are characteristic of the conventionalized Lower Columbia style. Although the nose has been broken off and the surface is marred, sufficient evidence remains of the skilled pecking-and-grinding technique employed to achieve the dramatic effect.



**Anthropomorphic Figure.**

Lower Columbia Style. 37½" high.  
Oregon Historical Society Collection,  
in custody of Portland Art Museum

Certain sculptures from the Lower Columbia area are slab-like in shape and hieratic in appearance. Only the head of this anthropomorphic form is carved in the round, the poorly articulated arms and legs and the conspicuously defined rib structure being rendered in relief on the two faces of the flat stone. This type of sculpture probably represents a ceremonial personage, as is evidenced by the decorated headdress and the object held in the hands and carved on the back.

**Arrow Smoother. Lower Columbia Style**

2½" high x 3¼" wide.  
Miss Myrtle Stevens Collection,  
Oregon City

Throughout the Columbia River area a number of refined streamlined forms were produced. The majority of these were utilitarian objects, such as this elegantly shaped Arrow Smoother. The fine geometric shape is achieved by an assured technique which demonstrates the technological accomplishments of these artists.





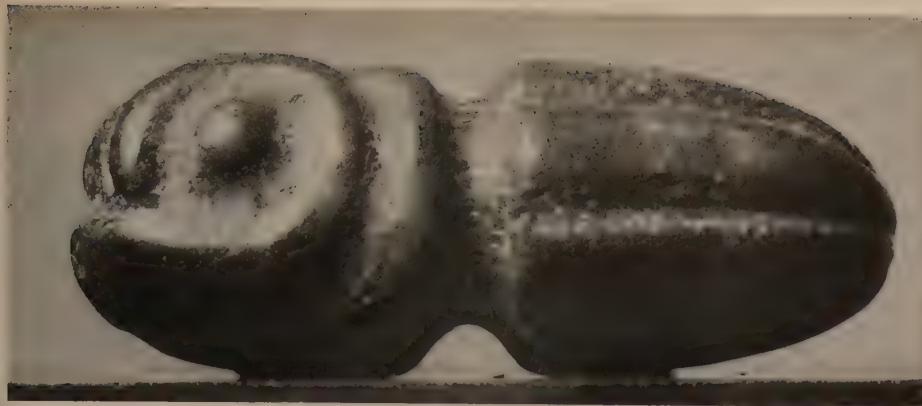
**Standing Owl. Lower Columbia Style.**  
22½" high x 13¾" wide.  
Oregon Historical Society Collection,  
in custody of Portland Art Museum

This Standing Owl magnificently illustrates the Lower Columbia style. The flat stone summarily defines the head, body and feet of the bird. Fullness of form is conveyed by the rounding of the outline and by the depth of line cut into the surface. The bird is conventionally rather than descriptively realized and rendered. Parallel chevrons representing wing feathers appear on either side of a vertical range of circular depressions, which repeat in reverse the eye forms and function as a primary design motive. Masterfully devised and impressive, the sculpture is richly imaginative.

**Double Mortar with Two Figures.**  
Middle Columbia, Dalles-Celilo Falls  
Style. 10½" high x 7¾" wide.  
Walter Klindt Collection,  
Maryhill Museum, Washington

In the Middle Columbia area the sculptures evidence a greater diversity in style than in other parts of the Columbia Valley. This double mortar is an excellent example of an elaborate, conventionalized style typical of the area. Two prong-like arms of similar diameter develop from a circular base to unequal heights. The upper part of each prong is carved in relief as a face, with sharp pointed ovals defining the eyes. The accented rib structure, so characteristic of Northwest stone sculpture, serves both heads and ties the two closely together compositionally.



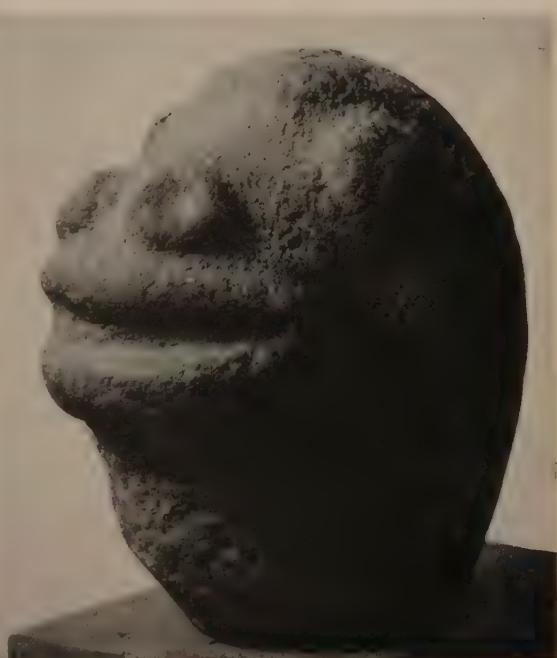


Club Head with Bird or Animal Representation. Middle Columbia, Dalles-Celilo Falls Style. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " long.  
O. Alexander Collection, Maryhill Museum, Washington

Stone clubs and pestles were often decorated in the Northwest with a bird or animal head; sometimes, as here, the entire object was carved. But few examples show such refinement of form and technical skill. Characteristic of Columbia Valley art are the impressive scale and the deeply ground grooves and surfaces to give fullness. It is an interesting conventionalization of organic form adapted to the requirements of a club's shape.

Seal (?) Head. Middle Columbia,  
Deschutes-John Day Style. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high.  
Oregon Historical Society Collection,  
in custody of Portland Art Museum

Carved animal heads are typical of the Middle Columbia area and represent in style and technique a high point of Columbia Valley art. They are not fragments of larger sculptures but were apparently carved as independent forms. The heads are conceived as expansive volumes. The cranium is shallow, and the features are economically carved as bold protruding shapes. In the majority of examples, the face terminates abruptly below the large, full-lipped mouth.



Animal Mortar. Middle Columbia, Yakima-Vantage Style.  
3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high x 8" long. L. O. Janeck Collection, Yakima, Washington



In the Columbia Valley, stone mortars were frequently carved in the shape of animals. The animal form in this example, possibly representing a turtle, is sculptured completely in the round. The head is enlarged, the body parts fully articulated and the rib-cage exaggerated and emphasized. In a manner typical of Columbia Valley style, all descriptive detail is given by means of deeply ground grooves. The scale is large and massive, the form powerfully sculptural in conception.

# ART, FILMS, AND "ART FILMS"

*George Amberg*

FOLLOWING the general trend in the documentary field, the art film—or rather, the film on art—has grown into an acknowledged branch of the film industry. Although the prospects for profitable exploitation seem rather uncertain for some time to come, the very interest in the art film, as lately manifested not only by educators, but especially by commercial producers and distributors, is significant. Even the optimist realizes, however, that this sudden attention indicates not so much a wave of esthetic enthusiasm on the side of the practical businessmen as the cautious admission that there may possibly be a market for such strange commodities as Matisse, Maillol or Van Gogh.

In the short span of barely two decades, the interest among experts—teachers, historians, creative artists—has changed from passive observation to active participation. This is due, in part, to the demonstration of the film's extraordinary potentialities as a medium of communication, information and education. It is no exaggeration for Charles Siepmann, in his thorough study of mass-communication media as a social force, to assert that technical advancement "has not only partly transformed the function of education . . . but profoundly affected the social environment and psychological climate in which modern education operates" (*Radio, Television and Society*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1950). Esthetic responsibility, implicitly assumed in any art film, cannot be dissociated from the larger function of the medium. The French scholar, Pierre Francastel, confirms that "there is no art film which has not, to a certain degree, a pedagogic value. . . . As soon as one animates, one also organizes the vision, one selects and, in a way, one teaches."

A curiously paradoxical situation has developed in the past few years: on the one hand, the demand for audio-visual material of every description and on every level grows faster than it can be satisfied; on the other, finished productions of some merit are available for which there is no organized market or means of distribution. The gap of reciprocal caution between producer and consumer has not yet been bridged; hence

neither side is anxious to take the risk of an investment, whether it be the budget for a production or the purchase price of an admission ticket. While everybody agrees that there is a sizable audience for art films, nobody seems to have a clear conception of either its possible size or its artistic demands. The consequence has been a good deal of chance experimentation, preciousness, sensationalism, sentimentalism and downright amateurism in the current production, which may well end by discouraging the very audience these efforts are intended to win. Quite properly Siepmann warns that "perhaps the greatest threat to our culture results from the general underestimation, in mass communication, of the public's potentialities."

The obvious danger inherent in the arbitrary large-scale dissemination of information can be met only by a comprehensive educational policy. In the area of our special interest, the crucial problem is that there seems to be no reasonable compromise between the people who dream of art films for the millions and those who produce them virtually *in abstracto*. It would be more realistic and fruitful for either group to work deliberately within a limited area, with accurately specified purposes and with a clearly defined audience in mind. "The" audience is less than a hypothesis; it is a fiction. It is shortsighted practice to waste on an anonymous, amorphous, captive audience whatever art films happen to be around. In reality there are different audiences, many of which are predictable and subject to analysis, such as a school class, a college group and any number of cultural organizations. In an article in the UNESCO brochure, *Films on Art 1950*, Pierre Francastel analyzes "the viewpoint of a pedagogue" and arrives at similar conclusions, stating in substance that every art film "should be designed for a specific public and a specific use. . . . Once we accept the film's demonstrational as well as its informative value, we must determine the principles upon which the interest of the various kinds of public should be aroused."

A film is guided observation. Under ordinary circumstances, the visual exploration of an



From W. Novik's *Images Médiévaux*, 1949, courtesy Otto L. Spaeth

esthetic object is a highly individual and volitional process. In viewing a film, however, the spectator has no choice; he is compelled to follow the pace, duration and direction of the continuity on the screen. The willingness to surrender, individually as well as collectively, to this mechanical imposition is characteristic for the picture-minded, screen-trained, mass-conscious audience of today. To a large extent even a critical spectator tends to believe implicitly in the authenticity and truthfulness of the photographic image. Although every camera owner should know better, he deceives himself by trusting the pictorial evidence rather than his own judgment or memory. This faith in the objective reliability of the technical recording reveals an almost romantic belief in the absolute of mechanical perfection and, correspondingly, an almost emotional distrust of essentially intuitive assertion or knowledge. Thus, perversely, art presented through films may derive an oblique and rather questionable authority from

admiration for the mere medium through which it reaches the audience.

Another important factor is the increasing emphasis on visual presentation as against the printed word—an observation properly stressed by so distinguished an art-film expert as Paul Haesaerts. Pictures are, if not more intelligible, at least more negotiable than verbal definitions. As the capacity for producing and absorbing image-language develops, the power wanes to interpret the intellectual complexities and implicit meanings of literary expression. In a subtle, almost intangible way, vision tends increasingly to assume the function of language; already it has become a language itself.

Visual mass communication is part of a larger, complex situation which has again been summed up by Siepmann: "Modern science and technology offer us a profusion of new tools; we must decide how we shall use them. . . . We realize the ambivalence of the resources offered

us by global mass communication. The circulation of ideas on such a vast scale involves great risks unless (1) the ideas conveyed are themselves clear and valid; and (2) their circulation is matched by some capacity on the recipient's part to grasp and assimilate them." If this seems commonplace, it is nevertheless worth remembering and repeating. The moving images of the film, in particular, exert a fascination which is apt to dull the critical faculties; their appeal is forceful, direct and almost irresistible. Even a mediocre film satisfies some native curiosity: it requires neither effort nor action; it sanctions the passive attitude of the individual and supports the natural inertia of the masses. A good film, on the other hand, is a tool or medium of incalculable power and usefulness. It is our task to watch that it be so.

The almost foolproof technical perfection of the modern film equipment makes it deceptively easy to "take pictures." The temptation is great and the advantages are evident: the film can keep a permanent and accurate record of fleeting events; it can be made on the original location; it can be duplicated and enlarged; it can be shown repeatedly and to many persons at a time; it permits close-up and panoramic views beyond the optical capacity of the human eye; it allows the choice of the best point of view and the best lighting conditions; and, most important of all, the film moves. The succession of images in a time sequence creates a visual situation of extraordinary complexity and suggestiveness. Dynamic or mobile composition is not merely an amplification or extension of static principles; it is essentially different in that each image depends on its respective position in a consistent and meaningful chain. The film maker exerts, in a specific and unique way, an infinitely greater directive influence upon the beholder than either the painter or the still photographer.

The least recognized, yet the most serious danger of the film documentary is its apparent authenticity. Even assuming that the principal intention be objective and accurate factual reporting, the film would still reveal its maker's individual taste and conviction in the choice of subject, the selection of views and the editing of the total footage. Indeed many experts consider editing the crucial phase of the production. It is this delicate task that gives the film its ultimate form and meaning. Editing determines pace and rhythm and the film's over-all dynamic pattern; it clarifies relationships in space and time; it balances the composition and places emphasis on climactic moments; finally, where sound is used, it adjusts and synchronizes sound and visuals. Just as expert and sensitive editing may result in a film of distinctive quality, incompetent or irresponsible editing may completely falsify or distort the object. Because it is less flagrant, it does more damage than such deliberate adjust-

ments as the overdramatization of an artist's life or the sentimentalization of a painting or even outright misinterpretation and bad taste.

The camera is no more objective than the operator behind it. An expert camera man makes extensive use of many legitimate and effective photographic devices. Thus optical distortion, properly controlled, may open surprisingly new perspectives. Close-up views and extreme enlargements may reveal minute details of design, techniques and texture ordinarily invisible to the human eye. The telescopic lens may bring into the range of close observation an object out of normal reach. Fast movement may be slowed down for convenient analysis; slow movement may be condensed into a shorter time to stress the feeling of continuity in movement, change and growth. Filters may bring out finer nuances and exaggerate or adjust contrasts. In addition, the illumination of the object proper may eliminate or emphasize, dramatize or understate significant characteristics. However, the very same means which so well serve the purpose of sensitive and imaginative visual exploration may easily be turned into as many questionable tricks if used without taste and discrimination. Unexplained detail, unjustified distortion, undefined scale, uncomfortable angles, unrelated elements, disregard of significant context and other mistakes of the same order, distort the wholeness and integrity of the work, disturb the expert and mislead the unsuspecting audience.

In summary: the art film is no objective document, any more than the work of art with which it deals. It is the personal interpretation of an experience in terms of film. The less it pretends to be objective, the better it is, and in its most successful accomplishments it becomes itself a work of art. Outstanding films, like Alain Resnais' *Guernica* or Henri Storck's *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux*, derive their authority and beauty not secondhand from Picasso and Delvaux, but from a creative concept, an imaginative treatment and a mastery of the métier.

The confusion begins with the very term "art film." There is evidently a difference between a film demonstrating the technique of etching and another exploring the magic world of Paul Delvaux, between one analyzing the canvases of Rubens and another showing Picasso in the act of painting—but this difference has yet not been defined in terms of either quality or purpose. Some attempts have been made to bring order and method into the present chaos. UNESCO in co-operation with the Belgian periodical *Les Arts Plastiques* has published two handsome brochures with several provocative articles and a selected listing of art films by country. The MAGAZINE OF ART in 1950 issued a second edition (now out of print) of its *Guide to Art Films*, listing three hundred fifty-three titles indiscrimi-

From André Cauvin's *The Mystic Lamb*, 1939  
(from UNESCO, *Films on Art*, 1949)



nately, and it continues to list new releases monthly. In preparation by The American Federation of Arts is an annotated and evaluative catalogue. This is a step in the right direction. While such a catalogue will do nothing to attack the present problem at its base, i.e. in the actual production, it at least offers the consumer a badly needed practical index of material and sources—although new films are issued faster than the reports can keep up with them.

Francastel maintains that, in his opinion, "It would be a most serious mistake, particularly at the outset, to substitute an arbitrary set of values for a trial-and-error experimental investigation into the public's reactions." However, is it not precisely the absence of standards and the haphazard experimentation on, rather than with, the public which is the main cause for the equivocal position in which the art film finds itself? Neither extreme is necessary: in fact preoccupation with standards should go hand in hand with an audience analysis. It would be highly desirable to show nothing but the best, if only there were the same easy agreement on what is indubitably best, as there is on what is outright bad. Is a film on Grant Wood less valid as an art film because its subject is a second-rate painter? Is the Maillol film good because it deals with an artist of stature? Are the delightful wit and irony of *Les Charmes de l'Existence* intelligible to an uninitiated audience whose members presumably adorn their homes with precisely this kind of art? Does not the very fact that a pleasant and popular film was made of Grandma Moses bestow on her work an importance that is out of keeping with its actual significance? What can a documentary on abstract art possibly mean to people who have never seen a non-representational painting and in all probability never will? Even films of equal excellence are not equally suited for all audiences.

The definition of the product and of its purpose are interdependent. It is not necessary to be anxiously categorical in classifying a film's content and intention; but it is necessary to determine its essential character even before it goes into production, and to maintain it throughout. For only under this condition can a film be directed to an appropriate and appreciative audience. There is a place for films of every possible description—provided they have a description at all, instead of the vagueness of style and aim which now generally prevails. Without offering more than a tentative essay for consideration, the following main categories may be suggested:

1. Instructional and technical films of the "how-to-do-it" description, such as *Teaching Creative Design*; *Stone and Sculpture*; *Make a Monotype*; *From Tree Trunk to Head*.
2. Factual, informative, descriptive, such as Cauvin's *Mystic Lamb*; Lucot's *Rodin*; Bam-

berger-Oertel's *Stone Wonders of Naumburg*; Chapman's *Lascaux, Cradle of Man's Art*.

3. Interpretive, didactic, and/or critical, such as Storck-Haesarts' *Rubens*; Haesaerts' *De Renoir à Picasso*; Pellegrini-Guttuso's *Experience in Cubism*; Shaw-Hughes' *Looking at Sculpture*.
4. Biographical, autobiographical, the artist in his setting, such as Campaux's *Matisse*; Lods' *Maillol*, Diehl-Hessens-Resnais' *Van Gogh*; Bouchard's *Fernand Léger*.
5. Narrative, based on a connected plot or theme, such as Emmer's *Cantico della Creatura*; Novik's *Images Médiévaux*; Diehl's *Fêtes Galantes*; Grémillon's *Charmes de l'Existence*.
6. Poetic, evocative, carried by an underlying idea or mood, such as Matter's *Works of Calder*; Gattinara's *Demoniaco nell'Arte*; Resnais' *Guerica*; Storck's *Monde de Paul Delvaux*.

Still a seventh category might be made up of creative, freely conceived, subjective statements such as Young's *Object Lesson*, Crockwell's *Glen Falls Sequence* or McLaren's *Begone, Dull Care*. Inclusion of films of this description in both the UNESCO and *Guide to Art Films* listings proves once more how loose is the definition of art films. Despite the esthetic merits of many such films, it is difficult to see how they belong in the company of the others; or why particular ones, rather than other predominantly experimental, subjective *avant-garde* films by Bunuel, Dali, Deren, Richter, Dreyer or Ruttmann—to mention but a few—should be selected. Hence it would seem better either to eliminate films of this type from art-film catalogues altogether, or at least to list them as a separate, special group.

A sharp distinction should be made between teaching films made specifically for classroom use, and films of general interest. In the first group the whole technique is still exploratory, hesitant and self-conscious. Although films like Len Lye's *Basic English*, Philip Stapp's *Boundary Lines* and the United Palestine Appeal's productions have conclusively demonstrated that precision of statement and economical effectiveness can be beautifully combined with taste and imagination, the average teaching films are deplorably dull and pedantic. Especially in this large area, reforms, initiative and progressive thought are most urgently needed. Children and adolescents are film-wise and spoiled. The attraction of an animated textbook or a screened instruction manual quickly wears off unless exceptionally well made. At least in technical perfection, if not in entertainment value, the teaching film must successfully meet the challenge and competition of the neighborhood movie theatre.

Arthur Knight calls the art film "a hybrid of Hollywood and education." Regardless of the audience for which a film is intended, it must not only live up to the demands of its contents



From François Campaux's *Henri Matisse*, 1946,  
courtesy Franco-American Audio-Visual Distribution Center

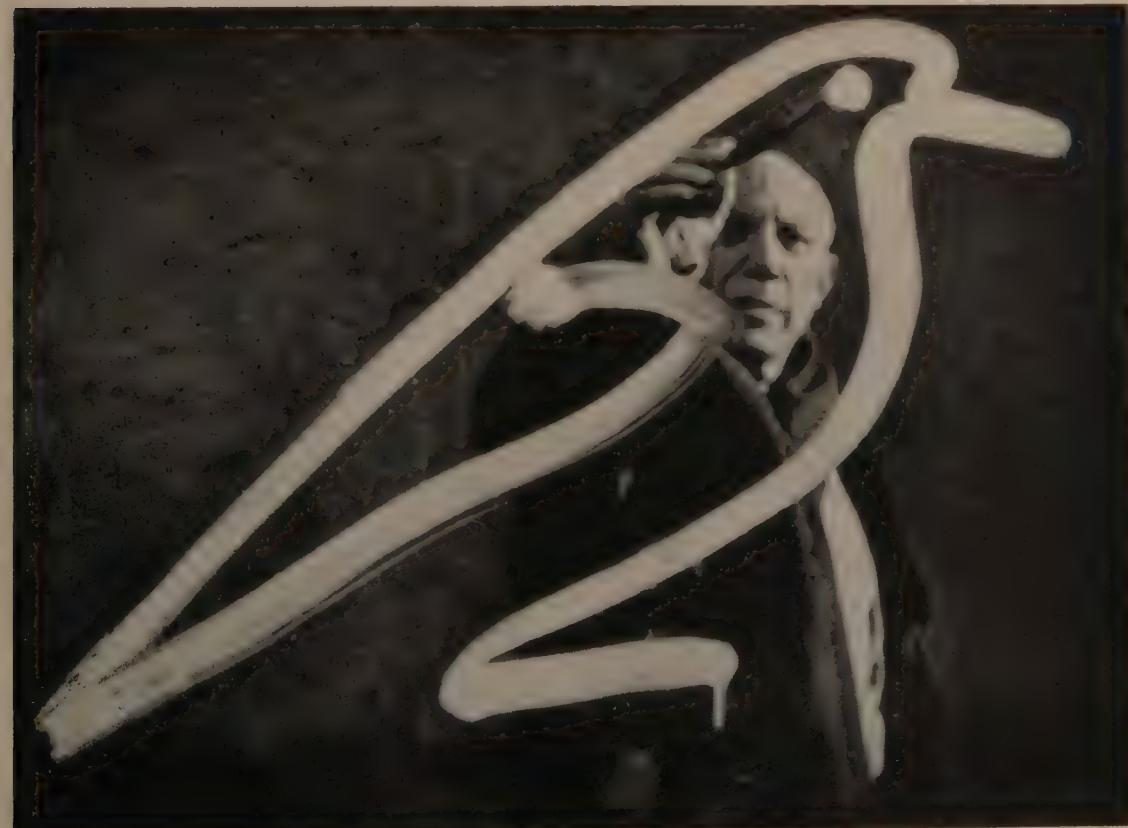
but also to the standards of good film work. It is easier to sell cheap candies in a pretty wrapper than genuine Russian caviar in a paper container. Indeed, it would be quite unrealistic hopefully to assume that the average layman would prefer the paintings of Giotto, Memling and Picasso to those of Bouguereau, Gropper and Steve Dohanos; the reverse reaction is more likely to occur. The educational task in the art film is not different from any other in that it takes time, persistence and method. It is doubtful whether the time has yet come for a nationwide distribution of art films through popular outlets. Meanwhile reactions to the pilot venture of Pictura Films, an ambitious, feature-length film, composed of six separate sections based respectively on works of Bosch, Carpaccio, Goya, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin and Grant Wood, will bear watching.

Beginning with the work of René Huyghe in France, André Cauvin in Belgium, Luciano Emmer in Italy, Curt Oertel in Germany, the art film began to claim serious attention. The total balance today, though gratifying, is far behind the progress of the medium in the field of entertainment or the straight documentary.

The majority of art films suffer from an ambivalence of character: not sufficiently expert and entertaining to satisfy the general market, not sufficiently scholarly and reliable to be useful in the field of teaching. It is not chance that the most successful accomplishments are films which have no classroom pretensions whatever, but a conviction and an emphatic point of view, like *Demoniaco nell'Arte*, *Guernica*, *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux* and, with a satirical slant, *Les Charmes de l'Existence*. To be truly critical, only about a score of art films meet the highest standards. There is, of course, some merit in many of them. Nobody, for instance, will be entirely insensitive to an artist's presence on the screen, and all films benefiting by this circumstance are assured of lasting interest.

Thus Lods' *Maillol* film, though thin and sentimental, is welcome because it preserves a noble living portrait of the master. There is an extraordinary sequence in Campaux's otherwise indifferent *Matisse*, in which slow-motion surprises the painter in the act of applying the brush to the canvas in a stroke of dramatic precision. There are Bouchard's intimate portraits of Fer-

From Paul Haesaerts' Visite à Picasso, 1950 (from UNESCO, Films on Art 1950)





From Paul Haesaerts and Henri Storck's *Rubens*, 1948, courtesy Brandon Films, Inc.

and Léger and Jean Hélion which have a colorful freshness and appeal often sadly lacking in similar treatments. There is Haesaerts' *Visite à Picasso*, too tricky and contrived for comfort, yet wonderful in those moments when Picasso's native temperament bursts into the film's measured pace. There is Jim Davis' *John Marin*, a rambling, long-winded picture story, curiously lacking in visual excitement and persuasion, but gratifying for brief glimpses of Marin's magnificent, animated head. Conventional, conscientious films, such as Chapman's *Lascaux* with its well-photographed cave paintings; Oertel's *Stone Wonders of Naumburg* with its grave and elegant figures; Lucot's *Rodin* with its careful assemblage of sculptures; Ehrhardt's *Barlach* with its tensely dramatic wood statues—all these, and many similar films bear the distinction inherent in the subject. They are useful contributions to the growing art-film archives which should eventually be organized.

Among the critical documentaries, Paul Haesaerts' films are outstanding in every respect: approach, selection and photography. In his *Rubens* he developed new and complex techniques of demonstration with animated lines, spot-lighting, blocking-out, circular movement, etc. While they ideally serve his stated purposes, they become gradually obtrusive as the long film proceeds, and the didactic insistence interferes increasingly with the enjoyment of an exceptional selection of canvases. His *De Renoir à Picasso*

is equally striking in its cinematic approach. Irrespective of one's acceptance of his basic thesis of juxtaposition—Renoir, the sensual; Seurat, the intellectual; Picasso, the emotional—one must admit that Haesaerts proceeds with an abundance of imaginative and illustrative devices, although these sometimes seem trickier than necessary. Purely as cinematic presentation, as explorations of new teaching techniques, as statements of a distinguished scholar, Haesaerts' films are of the very first order.

The abundant production of Luciano Emmer (partly in coöperation with Enrico Gras) includes an imposing array of great names: *Il Paradiso Terrestre* (Bosch), *Cantico della Creatura* (Giotto), *La Leggenda di S. Orsola* (Carpaccio), films on Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico, Goya, etc. Emmer developed the pictorial narrative as an effective device to maintain continuity—beautiful and moving in the Bosch, slightly forced in the Carpaccio and Fra Angelico, though the latter two will probably have more popular appeal. In an analysis of the *Paradiso Terrestre*, Lauro Venturi explains: "Adopting a new principle, Emmer succeeded in making a whole series of commercially successful films on art. He was convinced that the cinema had inherited the narrative functions that painting had once exercised and that by reviving those popular legends which were so often recounted in episodic pictures, a new public interest in painting could be created. So he decided to present the work of

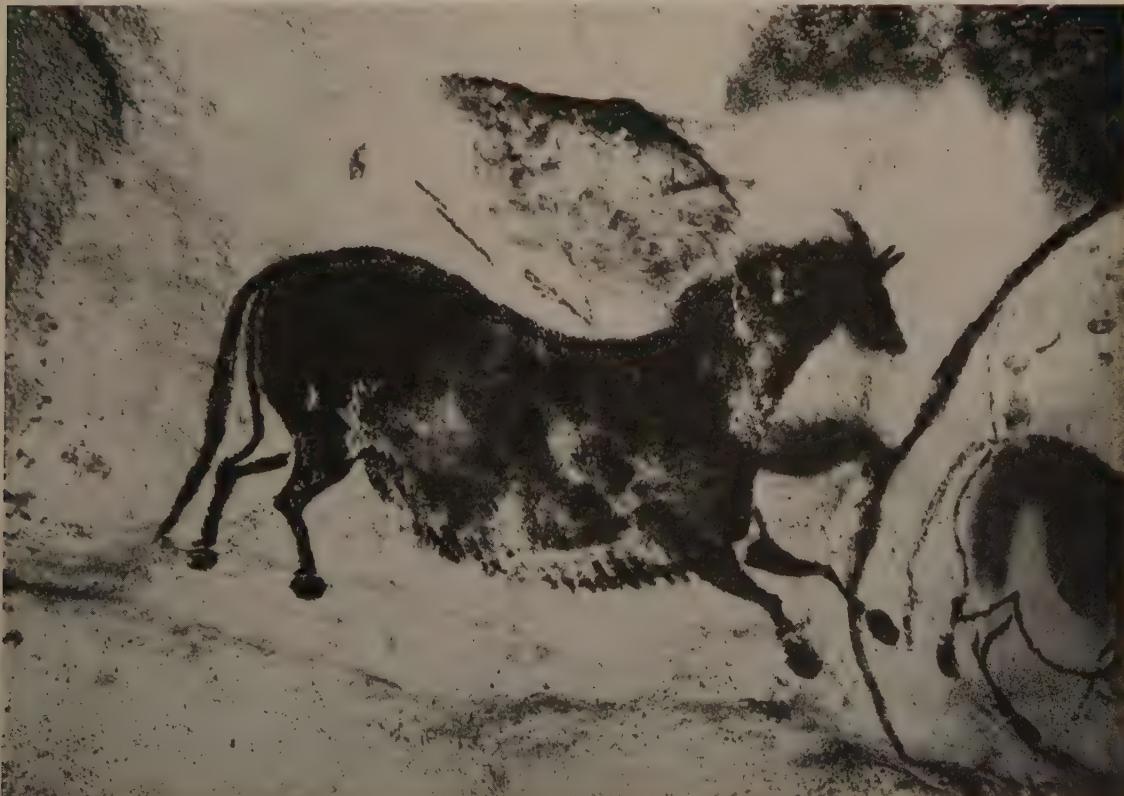
art on a narrative level which could be understood by a large public. He would need a story, even if it served only as a pretext, and would have to leave the historical and iconographic study of Bosch's painting to the experts." Emmer endlessly explores the painting in sustained movement, guided by the story sequence rather than by the structure and composition of the painting proper. This method, which has some obvious dangers, is the exact opposite of Haesaerts' approach. Since Emmer works from photographs rather than from originals, the visual quality of his films is uneven and often unsatisfactory. Of late, the quantity of his productions has also begun to affect the quality; none of his later films has quite reached the perfection of the first version of the Bosch. Most successful of his recent treatments is the *Goya*, possibly because it is less remote and stylized than the others and more varied in its imagery.

Alain Resnais, the maker of an ordinary *Gauguin* and collaborator in the somewhat questionable *Van Gogh*, has nevertheless demonstrated the vision of a genuine film maker. In *Guernica* he has created one of the finest art films today, and an exceptional film on any count. This film

has caused a good deal of controversy. It is true that Picasso's famous canvas is shown only in a few scattered fragments; that his paintings are presented with complete disregard for their chronology and style; that figures from larger compositions are shown out of context; that some grotesque or funny sculptures are totally misrepresented in a tragic, dramatic half-light; it is true, in short, that Resnais has used the original art like so much raw material, with sovereign disrespect for its original significance. In spite of these blatant violations, however, the film is a grandiose and gripping restatement, in film terms, of the emotion and the fury which originally moved Picasso to paint his indictment of war and inhumanity. It is conceived, not to the letter, but in the same spirit and with the same uncompromising hardness. If the work is considered an abuse of the good faith of the less informed, its ultimate justification would seem to be its essential agreement with the sense and the message of Picasso's *Guernica*.

Another exceptional film is Storck's *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux*. For anybody familiar with the Belgian surrealist's work, the film appears like an idealized reflection of the originals,

From William Chapman's Lascaux: Cradle of Man's Art, 1949, courtesy International Film Bureau





From Alexander Shaw's *Looking at Sculpture*, 1950,  
courtesy Brandon Films, Inc.

both faithful and unfamiliar. Sensitive to the poetic values of the images rather than to their actual existence in space, the film removes the pictorial reality into a world of unfathomable dimensions and extensions. It is one of those unusual cases where the film seems more significant and moving than the actual subject. In principle this is not a desirable situation; in fact it is an assumption. Subject and treatment should be of one essence, organically unified. But the relationship between the creative artist and the creative film maker is a strange one; one ceases where the other begins. Paul Haesaerts concludes a penetrating analysis of the critical art film with the following words (freely translated): "The art film has an exceptional power to penetrate deeply into a psyche, an imagination—to photograph, in a way, the very inside of certain minds or certain collective mentalities—and what superior minds, what brilliant cultural periods! In this way can the art film create to a large extent the 'displacement' (*dépaysement*) from his own life that the spectator seeks. Thus, through the intermediary of a profound psychological need, not at all alien to the arts, the cinema can become a means of insinuating and, so far, unequaled power for the dissemination of art. It fulfills a desire for whose realization artists in the instant of creation fervently hope, without daring quite to believe in it: the desire to spread their message far and wide, in time and in space."

This observation applies rightly only to films dealing with painting or the graphic arts. In sculpture and architecture, the space situation is given and the movability of the camera can be more fully and appropriately exploited. Mass, volume and relations in depth can be dynamically explored and clarified as the camera travels in time and space, moves in and out and around. One might assume that the film maker would therefore naturally turn his first attention to three-dimensional subjects. Actually, however, that has not been so. There is not one reasonably good film on architecture among the amazingly few that have been made at all. There exist only a few films on sculpture, and even they are far from successful. Sometimes sculpture has been photographed incidentally, as the byproduct of documentaries on churches, monuments and collections—as in Noël's *Les Gisants*; it has been used as the literal example for an artist's production, as in Lods' *Maillol*; it has been used as the illustration for a connected narrative, as in Bureau's *Evangiles de Pierre*; it has been used in a stiff textbook fashion, as in Toe's study of Rodin, *Pierre Vivante*. There has, however, been no truly cinematic presentation of sculpture in terms of its plastic values, no exploration of significant space situations and tensions, of mass and volume relationships, of surface treatment and textural qualities—in short, of the whole complex of specifically sculptural problems. Exactly

how exciting and revealing a sensitive and understanding camera study can be is strikingly demonstrated in only one case known to me—Alexander Shaw's *Looking at Sculpture*. Here the increasing enlargements of a tiny whalebone relief of about 1100 have an almost dramatic cumulative power of emotional communication. And the perfectly timed, minute scrutiny of the exquisite curves and folds, light effects and tool marks of a wood sculpture by Veit Stoss opens the eyes to barely realized, rarely envisioned discoveries of sculptural beauty. Sweeney's *Henry Moore* deserves to be mentioned as a move in the right direction. Visually competent and scholarly in approach, it has at least the recommendation of responsibility; but cinematically it is curiously static and lacking in visual excitement, and visuals and commentary never quite merge. On the other hand, Herbert Matter's *Works of Calder* offers virtually nothing tangible or substantial to the student of the sculptor and his work, while moving deliberately, with infinite photographic sensibility, through an endless world of visually related shapes and colors. It is a film *à propos*, rather than about.

To a large extent this satisfies and exemplifies the thesis of Gaston Diehl: "So far we have only caught a glimpse of the full emotive power of the pure image, the photograph in itself, freed from all anecdotal connections and depending exclusively on plasticity, composition and value contrasts. When this new awareness of the cinema's expressive possibilities makes headway among the producers and directors, the realist dogma will soon be abandoned." The realistic film, in this context, is the purely factual documentary, without concept, form and structure in cinematic terms. It should be added that to the extent to which the film artist relinquishes realistic—that is, objective—definitions and associations, he must supply imaginative—that is, subjective—vision and material. He must be truly creative. The supposed dilemma between the cinematic treatment of a straight "realistic" film and that of an "artistic" one is the consequence of uncertain definition and conception. There can be no doubt that the most successful art film, regardless of its specific content, purpose and execution, will eventually be the one with the finest film quality.

From Leonardo Sinigallì and Virgilio Sabel's *Geometry Lesson*, 1948, courtesy Lux Film Distributing Corporation



## Contributors

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ADELYN D. BREESKIN is Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, to which the Cone collection with its important works by Picasso, Matisse and others was recently bequeathed. She is the author of *The Graphic Work of Mary Cassatt* (New York, Bittner, 1948), as well as of numerous articles and catalogues.

The article by ALBERT ELSEN is the outcome of research done in France under a Fulbright Fellowship. Mr. Elsen is now completing a doctoral dissertation on the "Gates of Hell" at Columbia University under the guidance of Professor Meyer Schapiro, who suggested the topic. He is also preparing an art film on the subject.

PAUL S. WINGERT is at present on leave from Columbia University, as holder of a Wenner-Gren Fellowship for travel in New Zealand, Australia, the Fiji Islands and Hawaii to pursue research on Polynesian art. Author of *Sculpture of Negro Africa* (Columbia, 1950), his most recent publication is the text of the illustrated catalogue for the exhibition, "Prehistoric Stone Sculpture of the Pacific Northwest," available from the Portland Art Museum.

GEORGE AMBERG is lecturer on art at New York University. Consultant on Theatre Arts at the Museum of Modern Art, he is the author of *Ballet in America*, *The Theatre of Eugene Berman*, and *Art in Modern Ballet*.

## Forthcoming

The April issue will contain "The Virgin and the Dynamo," a study of Henry Adams by R. F. BLACKMUR; "Eighteenth-Century Landscapes and Gardens," by JURGIS BALTRUSAITIS; an article on Willi Baumeister by HANS HILDEBRANDT; "Joseph Wright of Derby," by CHARLES E. BUCKLEY; and appreciations of the late Kenneth Hayes Miller by two of his close friends and pupils, ISABEL BISHOP and REGINALD MARSH.

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## Letters to the Editor

Sir:

The National Sculpture Society recently sent a statement of protest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art concerning the current exhibition at that institution. This statement I refused to endorse, for I believed that it would prove detrimental to the interests of the National Sculpture Society and to the advancement of American sculpture. It was written by a small committee and approved by the Council of the Society. The members were unable to criticize its contents before it was circulated, because the statement was distributed to them and the public simultaneously.

The statement's confusion of artistic and political issues perhaps suggests ignorance or guile; esthetic and political radicalism are not necessarily inseparable. Its lack of restraint, its factual errors and irrelevancies compromise the statement's dignity and deprive it of the reasonableness desirable in a discussion of the art policies of a great museum.

All who submitted their sculpture for exhibition knew the composition of the juries of selection and award. The known artistic preferences of a jury of award forecast the character of its choice, and in this case, the type of awards could have been predicted. They displeased many sculptors and laymen.

Rather than criticize the greatest art museum of America for its appointment of a partisan jury, it would be better to compliment that institution for its broad encouragement of American sculpture.

It is unfortunate that this show has aroused contention, which is profitable only to publicity-seekers and venomous critics, but not beneficial to the cause of art.

PAUL MANSHIP, *Past President  
National Sculpture Society*

Sir:

The letter recently issued under the National Sculpture Society letterhead in regard to the Metropolitan Museum exhibition has quite logically brought forth a burst of indignation. I cannot refer to the letter as the "Society letter" because I am so well acquainted with its history.

I only recently became a member of the Society, considering it an honor to belong to an organization which has traditionally insisted that craftsmanship and artistry are indivisibly present in a true work of sculpture. But I have been re-impressed with the fact that no society on earth

can give a person unqualified honor.

When I attended my first Society meeting in December, I did not expect to speak, let alone become involved in a controversy. A few emotional demands from the floor for action in the form of a letter, and an equally emotional explanation of the Communist plot to undermine all our values by way of "modernistic" art, made me change my mind. I said that while I was not a modernist and did not like the prize awards, I thought a letter of protest would harm rather than help, and suggested that the way to combat what we think is "bad" sculpture is to show what we think is "good" sculpture. I talked at great length for a newcomer and drew a compliment from the Chair. Towards the close of the meeting, the Chair named me to the committee to study the problem.

On January 5th, I received a note attached to two ponderous epistles that had been composed, in a manner of speaking, by a member of the committee. Through some misunderstanding, I had not been notified of its first two meetings. The next day, I received an announcement of a meeting the following day, January 7th, "for the purpose of approving plans already made." I was cordially reminded, "If you feel you would like to attend, the committee would be pleased to have you do so." The original letter had been submitted to the Council and approved subject to modification.

Not wishing to be accused of straining the spirit or the letter of the rule, I shall not report on the committee meeting. Suffice to say, I did not consider the matter closed. I expected that the final draft, as such, would be submitted to the Council. It never was. In fact, at the January Society meeting, the next day, the matter was ignored.

A week later I received a note asking for my signature immediately, as the letters had to be printed and mailed. I replied, the same day, that I could not sign the letter: that the political implications outweighed any valid criticisms, that the opinions stated as facts could not be supported by authoritative historical documents, that the letter was a disservice to the Society. . . . I asked that I either be allowed to resign from the committee or be recorded as having voted against the letter. I have received no acknowledgment.

Five thousand letters were printed before my refusal was delivered. They had to be destroyed because my name headed the list of signers. There seemed to be great haste to get the letters out, as if to avoid expected resistance.

When the Society met on February 13th, "Operation Left-Wing" had become a "success." This was explained to us by the Chair, the committee chairman and the scribe at the business meeting that followed a late dinner and three excellent, time-consuming films that reduced the crowd to about a third of its original size. Com-

mendations from an ex-admiral and a lawyer were read. Then I offered an uninvited history of the "letter." I named and quoted an eminent art historian to the effect that "the letter was so utterly ridiculous" that he would not "dignify it by a reply," a statement endorsed by twelve colleagues whom I named. I quoted Professor Cantril on the unreliability of the polling method.

Esthetically, this controversy is regrettable and senseless. But in a larger sense it is not regrettable. A big, sore boil can be seen and felt, and demands treatment. A hidden focus of infection can chronically poison the body and the mind, hiding its depth and power by countless surface symptoms. "The letter" is another symptom of the most common malady of our time: fear and consequently hatred for anything and anybody that will not be dominated—a malady by no means monopolized by the Society. The sooner we all look more bravely into our mirrors the sooner we will have begun the fight that has to be fought.

Truth, humility, honor, freedom and success are not ends; they are processes—processes that depend on effort; processes that we shall never have the right to take for granted.

JOSEPH BROWN  
Princeton University

## Recent Art Film Releases

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# Book Reviews

Hans Hofmann, *Search for the Real, Andover, Addison Gallery, 1948. 91 pp., illus. \$4.50.*

In the chaotic life of today the most valuable efforts have been concentrated towards finding meaning and coherence. Both in science and in art the best minds have recognized the need for a more encompassing order in thinking, feeling and acting. The search is no longer for mere truth to facts, but for an understanding of fundamental, lawful relationships. In the visual arts creative efforts are concentrated on the laws of plastic creation instead of mirroring the optical facts of our familiar world. Significant contributions in the visual arts were made in the early part of the twentieth century. The cubists, Mondrian and others worked to achieve an organization of visual elements within the limitations of their medium. Their work had great impact, a fermenting influence, but produced few great teachers. Many perceptive and searching individuals comprehended their thinking and carried it further; but there were few inspired and sensitive painters who had the ability to pioneer as artists and to communicate their awareness to others. Hans Hofmann is one of the few. He absorbed the new spirit in Europe where he both studied and taught, coming to this country for the first time in 1930, and then almost single-handed brought forth a new, alert generation of painters. A living monument to his efforts are the many young painters whose work gives direction to American art today. As individuals they have shared a common experience which has served to sharpen their differences rather than to force them into any one mold or school.

The first significant tribute to Hofmann in this country, either as painter or as teacher, was given in 1948 by the Addison Gallery of American Art, where a retrospective exhibition of his work was held. *Search for the Real* grew out of this exhibition. Edited by Sara T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr., with an introduction by the latter, the book is arranged in sections, beginning with the introduction which gives details of Hofmann's life. The next section includes illustrations selected chronologically from the exhibition, with editorial comments. Some of the paintings in this section are reproduced in color on a page titled "Color Notes." About the size of postage stamps, the fifteen paintings shown, in spite of their diminutive size, give an indication of the range of Hofmann's color. Following the "Illustrated Introduction" are a number of essays written by Hofmann himself; the title of the book was taken from the first of these essays. A number of definitions dealing with terms frequently used by Hofmann in his writing and teaching, and finally an appendix in the form of a visual record of the Addison Gallery's entire exhibition, comprise the last two sections of the book.

There are, altogether, many illustrations which both accent and supplement the text. The selection, considering the number of works shown in the exhibition, is good. While many of the illustrations are small, in certain ways this liability is also an asset. The reader is compelled to fill in the hardly visible relationships and to form for himself the connections between images and words. The visual catalogue at the end suggests the gradual maturing of Hofmann as a painter and gives a useful background for the reader to evaluate Hofmann's ideas. It was with careful and respectful patience that the editors selected and arranged those essays which Hofmann himself felt most significant. They create an effective, melodic line through his divergent insights into the nature and aim of art and admirably fulfil a difficult task by bringing into focus certain qualities of Hofmann's thinking.

The difficulties which the editors faced in compiling the book were great, and to some extent remain unsolved. Hans Hofmann is one of those great teachers whose contribution cannot be fixed, nor can it be measured by any of his own statements or collections of statements. His inner core of understanding always takes form around concrete problems. His strength lies in his inexhaustible responsiveness to each new problem and in the penetrating vision with which he formulates his experience, in each instance as a unique happening. In spite of all the care, patience and sensitivity to his ideas which the editors could summon, they still could not recreate the fluctuating, rhythmical quality inherent in Hofmann's way of teaching. The depth of his understanding, acuteness of his vision and, most of all, his spontaneity are somehow lost in sentences which often appear to be complicated, metaphysical speculation. "The metamorphosis which takes place when an experience is translated into a medium of expression is a plastic act controlled by inherent but limited qualities of that medium. The infinite can only be created on the basis of such a limitation." And again, "The universe itself is limited in its complexity. Only the absolute nothing is unlimited, unthinkable, unseizable, shapeless, forceless, non-existent." Such sentences as these, in the context of his whole approach, and in a complementary relationship to a seen picture, might arouse provocative thought; detached, their meaning becomes diffused. Heard in an atmosphere of painters and echoed by enthusiastic young students, statements of this kind may act as catalysts, but on a printed page they are dangerous, for they lack the particular point of departure which should give focus to concepts as far reaching as these.

Hofmann's contribution is perhaps best summarized in the words of Adolf von Hildebrand, the late nineteenth-century German sculptor and theoretician, who wrote: "It is evident that we need clarity in our work as artists—as with any other creating man—that this clarity grows out of

the direct application of the instincts and not through verbally communicable relationships. In times like today when so many immature attitudes exist concerning artistic problems, and when there is such uncertainty with regard to the artistic instincts, it is imperative to present in an orderly and convincing sequence of relationships, ideas which in nature exist simultaneously, without beginning or end, mutually conditioning each other." Hildebrand's book, *Problems of Form*, was one of the first important verbal analyses of the laws of two- and three-dimensional visual organization. He had a decisive influence on Hofmann's terminology and ideas. Hofmann in his work and his teaching has further clarified and greatly enlarged the scope of these ideas.

GYORGY KEPES

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Chandler Rathfon Post, A History of Spanish Painting, vol. X, Cambridge, Harvard University, 1950. vii + 482 pp., 200 illus. \$15.**

"The Early Renaissance in Andalusia" is the title of the latest volume of Professor Post's monumental work, known to art historians throughout the world. This period is one of transition, in which the predominant Hispano-Flemish style of the Spanish late gothic is fused with the renaissance. Influences directly from Italy and simultaneously from Italianate masters of the Netherlands present numerous highly complex problems with which Professor Post has been able to cope fully, owing to the breadth of his understanding of European art as a whole.

The chief centers of Andalusian art in this age of transition were Seville, Cordova and Granada. Alejo Fernández, first mentioned at Cordova circa 1496 but active at Seville most of his life until his death (1546) is by far the outstanding master studied in the present volume. His style of painting, though Hispano-Flemish in origin, became so Italianate in treatment of space, architectural background, etc. that Professor Post concludes that he must have visited Italy. One among numerous "new" works of the master is the Seville Cathedral *Lamentation*, now documented as by Fernández. Thus is completely demolished the personality of Pedro Fernández de Guadalupe to whom it was formerly attributed.

The principal figure of the school of Cordova turns out to be Pedro Romána, essentially a master of the Hispano-Flemish tradition, whose renaissance traits are secondary and mainly limited to architectural details. Granada, reconquered from the Moors as late as 1492, was less productive than the other centers. Professor Post has clarified the misrepresented career as a painter of Pedro Machuca, a man who, in 1520, returned to his native country a full-fledged representative of the high renaissance. In the case of the well-known Florentine, Jacopo l'Indaco, his artistic personality unfortunately will never be known. His only surviving pictures are the predella panels



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of Dirk Bouts's triptych in the Royal Chapel at Granada, and they are in such a state of deterioration as to forestall any significant conclusions.

As usual in Professor Post's volumes, the appendix is a mine of new discoveries relating to artists studied in previous volumes. The longest single addition is devoted to the highly competent Toledan artist of the early renaissance, Juan Correa de Vivar. Most significant, perhaps, are discoveries of more paintings by Bartolomé Bermejo, the greatest of Spain's gothic painters. Two of the panels newly recognized as his in the Parochial Museum at Daroca in Aragon prove that the important retable of Santa Engracia, the central panel of which has long been in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, originally stood in a church in Daroca.

HAROLD E. WETHEY  
*University of Michigan*

**Elizabeth du Gué Trapier, Velazquez, New York, The Hispanic Society, 1948. xxii + 434 pp., 252 plates. \$7.50.**

The recent doubling and almost trebling of printing costs has made it hard to find books with plenty of large, clear pictures at a price that most people can afford. Publishers can make a profit on a well-illustrated art book only by printing a small edition at a high price, or by printing an enormous edition for much less. But few artists have an appeal wide enough to sell a huge edition. Therefore almost the only publishers of inexpensive but well-illustrated art books are the institutions that publish either at cost or even below cost and write off the loss to an educational program. Certainly one of the best buys on the present market is Mrs. Trapier's *Velazquez*, with its two hundred and fifty-two brilliantly printed, very large halftone illustrations. These reproduce all of Velásquez's great paintings and analyze many of them in exciting details of heads and hands and close-ups of backgrounds.

The text tells more about Velásquez than any other single publication. The many documents that have appeared more or less inaccessibly during the last decades are here gathered together and woven into a clear, continuous story. And what a baffling, simple narrative it is! Velásquez is almost the only painter who found one sufficing patron while still young and kept him all his life. Not that his constant King could always supply him with cash, for the King's own fireplace sometimes lacked logs to burn. Velásquez repaid his patron's constancy by painting

Philip IV in a series of portraits that show the maturing and aging of a man almost as relentlessly as Rembrandt's self-portraits.

Velásquez steadily ripened his technique until he had perfected it when he was about fifty. Then he unaccountably chose to ask for the position of palace majordomo, and frittered away his last—and best—ten years in the futilities of house-keeping for a court that was forever packing up and moving. Rimbaud's quitting of the literary cliques, his professional suicide in a rage of adolescent disgust, is easier to understand than Velásquez's allowing his art to be smothered just after he had matured it.

His approach to paint and canvas was as complex with perceptions as his approach to life was simple and matter-of-fact. That lack of imagination, that tolerance for trivia that marks the born man-of-the-world kept him from being either bored or amused by the sulky little Infantas with their delicate blond hair extinguished under stiff brown wigs, and their girlishness stifled by etiquette. Yet just because Velásquez never questioned life in any way or let anything trouble the lucidity of his recording, he was able to make Philip IV and his family live for us more vividly than art has ever made any family live for posterity. We know the sad blond king and his wives and children better than we know Renoir's wife and children, or Degas' cousins, or Saskia and Hendrikje, or Akhnaten's odd household. But Velásquez left almost no record of his own family.

It is not that Velásquez was in any way stupid. His remarkable library of books on art and science could not have been assembled by a stupid man. He simply questioned nothing. He owned almost no books on religion, not because he was irreligious, but because he did not need to do or believe anything more or less than the next man. Like Henry James, he had "a mind too fine for any idea to penetrate." In him the inevitable human itch to experiment concentrated uniquely on the handling of oil paint. Through this concentration, he managed to discover his intoxicating shorthand of the brush that so many painters have tried in vain to rival ever since his work became well known after about 1850. But Velásquez's breath-taking lucidity is impossible to achieve in our world that doubts and scatters. So for us today, his work fascinates by its inscrutability, like a shell or a flower, like something that has grown, and not like a thing labored over by man's effort and intelligence.

A. HYATT MAYER  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*

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**Diego Rivera, Acuarelas: 1935-1945, introduction by Samuel Ramos, New York and London, Studio Publications, 1948. Portfolio, 18 x 13", 25 watercolors. \$50.**

Among the figures of the first rank in contemporary art, Rivera stands out as the more objective master, meaning perhaps that his head consistently retains a priority over his heart. This also explains why Rivera is unashamedly an eclectic, who backs his own style with chips out of a history of art that he knows and appreciates better than many a scholar. Even if he were a less gifted artist, this position would single out Rivera from among his colleagues, who prefer to tug at their own heartstrings and to perform strictly personal antics with the brush.

Thus, what comes perilously close to a lack of originality—at least according to the contemporary usage of the term—has come to constitute Rivera's originality. While the passionate output of Orozco exhibits all the idiosyncrasies expected from the composite personage known as the modern artist, Rivera's work remains out-of-bounds.

Those who have looked too long and too exclusively at the School of Paris are apt to dismiss Rivera, especially in his later manner, with a shrug and an epigram such as “an academician in wolf's clothing.” Other less impatient minds, by taking time to relate his work to past periods of art, are able to follow its filiation through Ingres and David to the *peinture d'histoire* that was considered the one noble genre in the eighteenth century. One may indeed marvel at the sturdiness of the painter's convictions as he builds slowly through a lifetime his challenge of hard work, good craft and common sense, setting it as a potential dam against the tumultuous eddies of today's taste.

This portfolio deals only with the least difficult facet of Rivera's vast *œuvre*. Its plates are tastefully chosen from among the many watercolors that are to the muralist both a relaxation and a merchandise—as Degas inclined to call his own pastels—trimmed to reach a public that huge immovable walls cannot tap. Other watercolors of this same vintage have already proved best-sellers in the field of color reproductions, thus suggesting a publisher's reason for this expensive publication.

Even though it does not represent Rivera at his greatest, such work, sound in plastic and in human content, deserves a more thoughtful

presentation than is apparent here. A dispassionate appreciation of the quality of the four-color plates would raise perforce a question as to the integrity and power of mechanical reproduction, even when of relatively high caliber. Cool minds usually take it for granted that photography can do no wrong, and yet, in this case, the original image can hardly be said to emerge intact. The range of the printer's ink fails to follow the nuances of its fluid washes, and the clarity of its lineal statement is fuzzed over by the requirements of plate-making. It looks as if the originally crisp watercolors had been left in a tubful of water to soak overnight.

In the field of art criticism, this publication does little to increase our understanding of Rivera. The text—written by Samuel Ramos and handsomely printed—is an amiable paean of praise for the painter, rather than the general dissertation that its title, “The Style of Indian Mexico,” would lead us to expect. To make of Rivera the single pivotal factor of Mexican art is to disagree with the facts. He returned to Mexico in 1921; but already in 1913 and 1914, Francisco Goitia and Dr. Atl had penned manifestoes as detailed as blueprints for the coming renaissance.

According to Ramos, Rivera, on his return from Europe “is seized at once by the idea of creating a native Mexican style to give adequate expression to the Indian world.” And yet Rivera's first mural, an encaustic unveiled in March, 1923, over which he labored a year, was so heavy with reminiscences of Byzantine Italy that his biographer, Bertram D. Wolfe, saw fit to label it “a false start.”

Similar oversimplifications, intended to bolster Rivera's posture in art history, fail to explain the telltale *volte-faces* that stamp his early frescoes with an unrest close to greatness. Those who worked with and near him at the time of his return to the *patria* remember still the fierce inner conflicts—exploding at times into outward crisis—that marked his conversion to fresco and to Mexico.

The Paris where he had lived for eighteen years held beliefs opposed to those of post-Revolution Mexico. Nowadays, after surrealism has again made story-telling, or at least a certain kind of story-telling, fashionable in painting, it is difficult to recapture the narrowly puristic creed held as the only truth in the best-informed Parisian circles, a little over a quarter of a century ago. Then a dash of the literary in its

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make-up was enough to brand a picture as unworthy. It was the period when Jean Cocteau defended Pablo Picasso with vigor from the unwitting "insult" of an innocent newspaperman who had referred to a group of two nude figures painted by the Catalan as representing *Adam and Eve*. The same Cocteau proclaimed still-life as the supreme genre, because it was less tainted than others by psychological inroads. If anyone had had the audacity to attempt it, a cardinal sin in 1920 would indeed have been a didactic painting with historical subject matter. Just this the Mexican painters were set to do.

Rivera had shared for a decade in the lore of prejudices, loves and taboos that inspired the small group of pioneer cubists who were his colleagues in France. After his return to Mexico, even though he soon became a leader of the local movement, his cubist-trained conscience could hardly stomach, at times, the resurrection of didactic painting that surged as an aftermath of the Revolution. His early frescoes even attempted the impossible: to reconcile his cubist manner, bred experimentally in the hothouse of a studio, with the very different plebeian requirements of dialectical painting. States Ramos blandly, concerning that time, "Rivera began his creative period already with complete awareness of his stylistic aims...."

What constitutes the more original feature of this publication, and one that by itself makes it worth owning, are the illustrations scattered through the text. They are in the manner of simple linecuts after originals in brush-and-ink of a bold type, and never before reproduced as successfully. These are just the kind of apparently simple drawings that most American publishers, alas, esteem just right to suffer substantial reduction in layouts. These brave studies are reproduced here at what could be their original size, and thus escape the weakening of impact and content that accompanies a shrinkage in size.

It is revealing to compare the stylish make-up of this portfolio, issued in a limited edition, with the graphic means favored by the Mexican artists in an earlier phase of the movement. Then the organ of the group was *El Machete*, a sheet printed on the cheapest paper, made to sell on the streets for a penny. Its biting woodcuts were woefully lacking in what attracts decorators seeking a certain kind of picturesque, neatly packaged and "suitable for framing."

JEAN CHARLOT  
University of Hawaii

#### FIRST SHOWING OF PAINTINGS

# R. HUNTER

HUGO  
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26 E. 55th St., N. Y.  
PL 3-2314

Henry Wilder Foote, John Smibert, Painter, Cambridge, Harvard University, 1950. vii + 292 pp., 10 illus. \$6.

Dr. Foote's volume of twenty years ago on Robert Feke at once became the permanent basis for everything which anyone else might find it necessary to write about that painter, whether in agreement or in dissent; and now a new work repeats that achievement in the case of the painter who most strongly influenced Feke. This book on the elder Smibert, including an appendix on his painting son Nathaniel, is indeed a model of research and presentation. There is no radical alteration in estimating either Smibert's historical position in England and New England, or the technical and esthetic quality of his portraiture, but there is both a marked increase of biographical detail and a most effective sifting of the pictures for authenticity.

Among those unacceptable to Dr. Foote is one of particular interest—the double portrait of Captain and Mrs. Johannes Schuyler at the New-York Historical Society. This was given to Smibert by that admirable scholar, William Sawitzky, but even his authority does not make it persuasive to everyone. Perhaps John Hill Morgan's attribution of it to John Watson should be treated with reserve until the entire situation in colonial New York has been further clarified.

For biographical facts about Smibert, Dr. Foote has searched not only books and periodicals but also churchly and legal records, and he has gone beyond Walpole to the sources in Vertue. From the latter's notes he illustrates an outline sketch of a now unknown elaborate group portrait by Smibert done in London. Dr. Foote quotes laudatory poems and Bishop Berkeley's letters; he prints elaborately detailed orders on London by Smibert for his "colour shop" in Boston, and the inventory of Smibert's estate. All this gives the student ready access to much material which is important not for Smibert alone but for understanding colonial conditions in general.

The concluding chapter of the biographical section treats of Smibert's influence; here Dr. Foote, in discussing the ideas of Mr. Burroughs, Professor von Hagen and Mr. Flexner, re-states his own earlier opinions concerning the relations between Smibert and Feke. However that particular problem may be resolved, Dr. Foote has so well ordered stylistic consideration of both Smibert and his son that all further discussion must be based upon his catalogue.

VIRGIL BARKER  
Coconut Grove, Fla.

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**Barbara Morgan, Summer's Children, Scarsdale, Morgan, 1951. 159 pp., illus. \$5.**

This is a book about a summer camp for boys and girls. It is an account, in many pictures and few words, of camp life, from getting up in the morning to the after-supper story hour, from chores to games, from horseback riding and canoeing to music and theatricals.

Surely there can be no other document about summer camps more complete and authentic. There is a foreword by Dr. Mary Fisher Langmuir of the Child Study Association of America, and an essay about camp life and management problems by Helen Haskell, who, with her husband Douglas Haskell, is an able camp director.

Barbara Morgan has made her book of universal appeal. Her sensitive photographs, skilfully combined with words, capture the world of youth with heartiness and tenderness, with humor and sympathy. It is as if the camp, fairly teeming with children, was a cross-section of children everywhere that children are free.

She tells us, in an all-too-brief "Photographer's Note," that she "conceived this book as an affirmation of the art and science of human relationships it has been my joy to witness." Her photographs are indeed a joy to behold. She has selected them from hundreds she has taken over a period of fifteen summers. She has seen the camp as a parent, as a friend of the directors and counselors, and as a camper herself, for she followed with her camera the boys and girls on their hikes, at games, doing chores—yes, even in their dreams. What could not be captured with the camera—their words—she recorded.

Pictures and words are edited and put together with imagination and skill rarely found in picture books, so that they reinforce each other. Each page she designed herself, planning the layout to carry the message. For example: on a left-hand page children listen to a counselor reading a story from a book; opposite a child lies abed; over the picture words from the story are repeated: "an old beaver . . . sleek and dripping . . . nest of rushes . . . warm . . . and dry . . . and warm. . ." Words that the child has heard, words that with the picture describe the warmth not only of this child in bed but of the environment.

Again: Children in the rain, faces upturned, mouths wide open. And beneath, "It's raining! . . . It's pouring! . . . The old man is snoring!" A chant, to be sung, not read. Through-

out the book there are many chants. Some are without words, for words would be obtrusive: A girl with a sensitive face fairly clings to the side of a rock, intent on playing a recorder. Opposite two happy girls dance in the sunshine beside the lake. Elsewhere: Hands hold a snake. Opposite a girl spreads against the sky between her fingers a cat's cradle of string. "The feel of a horse": two children rub the noses of a team. Opposite a girl is painting: "This is Midnight . . . he has broken away from the barn . . . he's running away."

To grown-ups *Summer's Children* will bring back long-forgotten memories. They are not nostalgic memories, for they are not of the past. They are universal, they are all around us, they are here for us to enjoy if we but have perception and understanding. *Summer's Children* is a moving interpretation of the magic world of youth.

**BEAUMONT NEWHALL  
George Eastman House**

**Piero della Francesca, Frescoes, with introduction by Roberto Longhi, New York, Oxford University (Iris), 1949. 22 pp. text, 14 color plates. \$6.50.**

The enthusiasm of critics, the public and consequently also publishers for the art of Piero has reached such a pitch that several books devoted to it have appeared within the past four or five years. While Phaidon has issued Clark's book, another publisher affiliated with the Oxford University Press, Iris Books, has brought out a volume containing fourteen large color plates of the Arezzo frescoes, preceded by a brief essay by Roberto Longhi drawn from his monograph on the artist. The publishers have not done justice to Longhi's text; the translation is clumsy, and the editing careless. The painter of the St. Sylvester frescoes in S. Croce, for instance, is given the unpleasant name "Naso." The publisher has furthermore done what no canny producer of mediocre color plates can afford to do: print the same section of a painting on more than one plate. The reader cannot escape conclusions about the reliability of the color if he is offered the opportunity to compare the train of the Queen of Sheba's lady visible in Plate III with that appearing in Plate IV, or the lady of Queen Helena in Plate X with the detail of the same figure in Plate XI. Forced to become wary, however, the reader will less easily be misguided.

**MILLARD MEISS  
Columbia University**

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**H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, Arrest and Movement, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1951. xxiv + 222 pp., 47 figs. + 94 plates. \$7.50.**

Modestly subtitled an essay on a specific problem in ancient Near Eastern art, this book represents far more than that, for the problem which Mrs. Frankfort has chosen, the relation of the artists to space and time, is inextricably bound up with a whole pattern of life and thought.

In her introduction the author defines the differences between corporeality or functional rendering as found in Greek art and the various types of non-functional representation in the ancient Near East. Likewise she contrasts two- and three-dimensional space with the ambiguous space found in ancient art. Having thus clarified the modes of expression found in the area of her inquiry, Mrs. Frankfort proceeds to work out separately the treatment of space and time in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Crete.

She finds in Egyptian reliefs of the Old Kingdom, especially in those of private tombs depicting scenes of daily life, a deliberate avoidance of spatial illusion of "a portrayal of the organic which would entail aspects of transience, functional corporeality, and above all a tensional relation between dynamic centre and surroundings." Her explanation for this is that these scenes were not meant to be a mere continuation of life after death but were intended merely to give typical aspects of life for the benefit of the "man-in-death watching life's manifestations." The same type of spatial rendering was used in the royal reliefs of the Old Kingdom, since it adequately expressed "the timeless perfection of a divine king revealed in his acts."

Modifications of this attitude in later times and finally the revolution of the Amarna period which transformed the timeless scenes into ones in which space and time were often defined, which then give an effect of actuality and draw the spectator into their orbit, are traced step by step and accompanied by a brilliant analysis of the historical reasons for these changes.

Linked to her investigation of the treatment of space and time in ancient art is the problem of monumentality, which the author defines as the "tension between the ephemeral and the lasting, between concrete event and transcendent significance." Obviously such monumentality was never sought by the artists of the Old King-

dom and appears in Egypt only after the Amarna period, in the royal reliefs of Seti I and in the Luxor rendering of Ramses II's Battle of Qadesh.

In Mesopotamian art, however, which often shows a tendency towards actuality, restrained only by a desire for "order, measure and relation" or by formal, decorative considerations, Mrs. Frankfort is able to point to the Warka vase and the steles of Naram Sin and of Hammurabi (about six hundred years apart from each other) as showing that tension "between the human and the exalted," between the temporal and the timeless, which imparts to them a monumental quality.

In contrast to Mesopotamia and even to Egypt, Cretan art is found to lack conspicuously a desire for monumental statement. Cretan art has "absolute mobility" expressing the joy of movement that is the essence of the ritual play so often depicted in Cretan works.

By merely trying to summarize in a few words Mrs. Frankfort's general findings, the reviewer cannot do justice to the wealth of stimulating ideas contained in this book, nor may the few quotations be sufficient to convey the charm of the diction by which she expresses her thoughts. Neither can differences of opinion concerning the evaluation of certain monuments and periods be voiced here. It is far more important to note that this book demonstrates the value of formal analysis of ancient art, not only for the understanding of the problems presented by the ancient cultures themselves but also for the insight which such analysis provides into the main-springs of artistic creation of all times.

**EDITH PORADA  
Queens College**

**Leo Van Puyvelde, Van Dyck, Brussels, Elsevier, 1950. 239 pp., 56 illus., 6 in color. \$12.**

Since the turn of the century, the genius of Van Dyck—at one time even more highly considered than that of Rubens—has been relegated by most scholars to a secondary position largely dependent upon his "master." The eminent historian, Puyvelde, presents the idea, at first somewhat shocking, that the period of directly traceable influence was no longer than a year and a half; and he shows that the temperament and technique of Van Dyck had matured prior to his association with Rubens' studio. Furthermore, he had developed so rich and complex a style at a

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very early age as to cause confusion and error among the art historians who like to categorize specific changes in the development of this great Flemish portraitist.

In his critical appraisal of commonly held views relating to the life and work of the painter, Puyvelde unmasks the frequent distortion and lack of evidence in biographical documentation. With a lively skepticism, he re-examines the data and the works of art themselves, disclosing a sensitive, precocious and highly skilled painter, not a decadent youth spoiled by honors, wealth and women of the English Court, but a frail man who managed to create prodigiously in his span of forty-two years while establishing a superlative portrait style that profoundly influenced this branch of art for over two centuries.

While the personality and painting of Van Dyck are admirably handled, the section on drawings is largely repetitive of the greater part of the study, and such material as the Chatsworth Sketchbook, a treasury of primary sources for students of art history and for pure esthetic enjoyment, seems too summarily dismissed.

In support of the lucid French text is an excellent series of reproductions, many of which were newly prepared and carefully selected to demonstrate the revolutionary ideas of the book, namely, the relative independence of Van Dyck from Rubens, and the development of his distinctive spirit, style, composition and brush-handling from his beginnings in Antwerp, through his Italian sojourn (not primarily for purposes of study, as commonly believed, but to execute commissions), his return to Antwerp and the final English period.

JOHN H. LA MARRE  
New York University

**David M. Robb, *The Harper History of Painting: The Occidental Tradition*, New York, Harper, 1951. xv + 1006 pp., 506 black-and-white + 16 color plates. College edition, 7.50; trade, \$12.50.**

The act of writing does not come easily to David Robb. On page 58, for example, in a comparison of the familiar Dura-Europos *Ritual Scene* with typical Hellenistic or Roman paintings, one reads: "The relation in time and space that make the visual facts portrayed in the other pictures an experience corresponding in its way to that which one would have in the presence of the actual scene have no counterpart here." Or on page 897: "It was Le Corbusier who had

coined the phrase that a house should be a machine for living that was one of the most widely quoted slogans of the so-called 'International Style' in architecture of the 1920's."

Between the first halftone, a bison from La Grèze, and the final illustration, the *Guernica* with what one fancies is the bison's lineal descendant in the upper-left portion, are twenty-two chapters of thick prose interspersed with more than five hundred indifferently printed halftones and color plates.

And yet the ponderous style confers advantages. The reader, necessarily moving at a very slow pace—one cannot skim Robb's prose—becomes more and more aware that if the manner is difficult, the matter is likewise. He may recall Goethe's aphorism to the effect that the business of art is with the difficult and the good.

In my opinion the first two chapters, on preclassic and on Greek and Roman painting, are not up to the standard of the rest of the book. Robb here seems dutiful rather than vitally concerned. He tells us that in the use of color "the Egyptian seemed singularly insensitive to the most elementary decorative possibilities or harmony of relationships" (p. 16). The forms in *Paris on Mount Ida* from the Naples Museum "are not yet seen in correctly diminishing dimensions" (p. 54).

But beginning with Chapter 3 Robb is at last in the middle ages, and it becomes apparent that *The Harper History of Painting* is not just one more possible (or impossible) textbook, but an important work of extraordinary scope. His passion for Italian art is contagious; few have written in this well-plowed field with more penetration or affection for its monuments. Although one cannot describe as eloquent his handling of graphic arts in Chapter 8, certainly his ponderous style takes on an appropriate cadence here.

Robb does not proceed from photographs or others' monographs; his is the approach of the man who knows paintings at first hand and then re-examines them for the purpose of this book. Each chapter starts off with a brief but valuable summary of cogent cultural factors. Artists are treated biographically, related to one another and to previous traditions. Iconography receives a painstaking care almost unprecedented in a handbook, and demonstrates a thorough scholarship of which a Morey or Panofsky could well be proud. Individual monuments are subjected to a stylistic analysis which may leave something

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to be desired—until it is recalled that Robb is writing on the tradition and history of painting, and not on art appreciation. Perhaps in order not to confuse the reader overmuch, he views most art through Italianate eyes. If occasionally the analytical method used seems more appropriate to Florence than Flanders, it is at least the consistent view of a great humanist steeped in the renaissance tradition.

In another edition—which this book will so richly deserve—dimensions of the works illustrated would be a useful addendum. Medium is described only in the graphic field, but there is plenty of room under each cut to add this information in the case of paintings. "Value" is defined in the glossary as follows: "Component of a color determined by the amount of gray in it as distinct from its hue or its saturation; sometimes referred to as its brilliance" (p. 963). This is perhaps technically correct, but likely to baffle the undergraduate who will invariably confuse value with intensity and who comes only slowly to the realization that value is the black-white equivalent of a given swatch. The equivocal character of Robb's definition is restated variously in the text, and unfortunately obscures otherwise significant commentary with regard to Hals, Vermeer, Velásquez, Courbet, Corot, Stuart and the impressionists in general.

PAUL PARKER  
Hamilton College

**Stamo Papadaki, Oscar Niemeyer, New York,  
Reinhold, 1950. 220 pp., illus. \$8.50.**

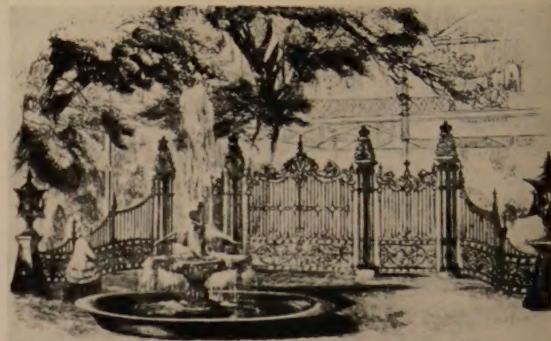
Niemeyer's architecture is the tropical offspring of LeCorbusier's teachings. Whatever deviates from the master's design is interesting and structurally searching.

The tidal waves of the vaulted roof of the church of Saint Francis at Pampulha is probably Niemeyer's best contribution to modern Brazilian architecture (and hence the most disliked by the public). The parabola of the curve is reminiscent of Freyssinet's hangar at Orly—a compliment for Niemeyer.

Special praise must be given to photographer Marcel Gautherot and to Stamo Papadaki who has laid out the photographs, drawings and captions with an exquisite sense of proportion and coordination.

FREDERICK J. KIESLER  
New York City

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